

CONSIDER INDIA

AN
ESSAY
IN
VALUES

HORACE ALEXANDER

FROM THE BEGINNING of British rule in India there were men and women from the ruling country who came to India and were captured by it. Often they sacrificed self-interest to take up the cause of India and establish an understanding of her people — their way of life, their needs and their aspirations. In return, to those who were interested in her culture, India gave her history, traditions and philosophy. All the members of this great company benefited India in one way or another but the contribution of a few was truly outstanding. The names of Hume, Andrews and Annie Besant come immediately to mind; also that of Horace Alexander, the English Quaker, who was so close to Gandhiji.

Out of his deep feeling for India comes this book in which he traces the emergence of a new India whose impact and importance should not be underrated. This is the India of democratic traditions and renascent Buddhism, the India the Mahatma did so much to shape and where his work is being carried on by Vinoba Bhave and his disciples. It has been tempered by the Christian doctrine and cleansed by the struggle for Independence. "The India of the Buddha, the Mahabharata and especially of the Bhagwad Gita, has come to a new birth" Horace Alexander proclaims.

Though this book seeks primarily to convey the essence of the new India to the West, no Indian can ignore what is written with such conviction and with so complete an absence of either prejudice or obscurity.

HORACE ALEXANDER was born in 1899 and educated at Bootham School, York and King's College, Cambridge. From 1919 he taught at Woodbrooke Quaker College, Birmingham. During a visit to India and other Eastern countries he met Gandhiji at his Sabarmati Ashram in March 1929. During Gandhiji's visit to England in 1931 Horace Alexander was often with him. When he was stationed with the Friends Ambulance Unit in Calcutta he visited Gandhiji who was at that time interned in the Aga Khan's Palace at Poona. He also saw a great deal of him in 1947-48 in New Delhi. Among his writings on India are *The Indian Ferment* (1929) and *India Since Cripps* (1944).

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AN ESSAY IN VALUES

HORACE ALEXANDER



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P R E F A C E

WE HAVE been taught in this generation to think in terms of civilizations, some still alive, some dead ; these civilizations largely control the minds of men in each epoch of history, and the forms of society that man creates. The civilization of the modern West, in which many of us have grown up, and which has affected the whole world in the past two centuries, stems from Palestine and Greece, or, if we look further back, from Egypt and Babylonia, and from several local civilizations that flourished long ago for a time in the Mediterranean area. But India and China, Tibet and Japan, are separate, and their roots are in different soil. Western scholars of our age, when they talk of the heritage of the ancient world, still commonly confine themselves to the Mediterranean countries, with Mesopotamia and Arabia and Persia possibly included. The ancient cultures of China and India are omitted.

If all that is meant by this is that the West has no roots in Vedic India or in Confucian China, no doubt this is true ; but if it is also assumed that western man can consider himself educated if he has absorbed what he can from Judea and Greece and Rome without reference to any other culture, then surely such a lop-sided view of the heritage of man is erroneous and even dangerous. For better or for worse, we now live in one

world. What happens to China and India and among their Asian neighbours, in politics, in economics, in ideology, and in the growth of human thought, will surely affect us all — just as surely as events in Africa and the Middle East, in America, North and South, or in the Soviet Union, cannot be neglected by Europe. So we Europeans, we westerners, must begin to bring the great cultures of the East into the compass of our knowledge and understanding.

But if they are dead, do they matter? Whether Mao Tse-Tung and his colleagues are at present engaged in killing the Confucian tradition in China I do not know. But the idea that the Hindu tradition is dead, an idea commonly accepted on the authority of Macaulay and others in nineteenth-century England, needs to be revised. A hundred years ago Hindu culture may well have seemed dead to outside observers. But today things are happening in India which suggest that the death was prematurely notified. The India of the Buddha, the Mahabharata and especially of the Bhagavad Gita, has come to a new birth. It is important, therefore, that we examine both its roots and its new vitality. Either we must make room for Indian culture, and see what we can learn from it, or East and West may become needlessly estranged; and in any case, if we turn away in ignorant disregard, it is we who are the sufferers in both mind and spirit.

The culture of India caused some stir in the western world in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; then it was almost forgotten.¹ Max Müller and Edwin Arnold were among the few who, even in the nineteenth century,

¹ See *Modern India and the West* ed. by O'Malley, O. U. Press, 1941, especially the chapter, "Indian Influence on the West" by H. G. Rawlinson.

discovered hidden treasure in the Indian classical tradition and tried to call the attention of the West to what they had found. But their works had a very limited influence. Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial* and *Light of Asia* still have a steady sale both in the West and the East ; but I doubt if they are often read in the ancient or even the modern Universities of Britain, and I have not heard of them figuring in any serious arts course. The cult of India has been regarded, not without reason, as the cult of sentimental eccentrics or of elderly women who like to dabble in the esoteric. Hinduism and Buddhism, as the cultured American " man of the world " Edmond Taylor observed before he became " richer by Asia ", had produced " theosophy and Schopenhauer and many other horrors ".²

The writer makes no claim to be learned in the Hindu classics. The little he knows has mostly reached him through the poems of Edwin Arnold or the commentaries and interpretations of C. Rajagopalachari and other Indian contemporaries. What follows in the first part of this essay is not a scholar's disquisition on the sources of modern Indian culture. It is something quite different. For thirty-five years India, chiefly political India, has been part of my life. For about a dozen years I have lived largely in India, which has become a second mother-land. My intercourse has been mainly with Indians, and so I suppose I have absorbed, or at least become sensitive to, their outlook on life ; and as the years have gone by, I have seen a little of what the wisdom of ancient India means to some of the sons and daughters of modern India. Those who want a scholar's commentary on the Gita and other Indian classics can

² *Richer by Asia* by Edmond Taylor, p. 24.

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read what Dr. Radhakrishnan and others have to say. I am more concerned to try to interpret the significance of the revived emphasis on the Gita in Indian life and thought, a revival which has been proceeding, as I am told, for some two hundred years. Again, why has Buddhism, or at least the teaching of the Buddha, found a new vogue in India today? What, in a word, does ancient India mean, not to those who want to repudiate everything that comes from the West, but to those who, without rejecting the wisdom that comes from the West or the need for modernising many aspects of Indian life, still find their roots in Indian soil? Let us see, if we can, what the classics of India mean to the educated Indian of today. From that we can pass on to other influences that have affected the mind of India, and so to the resultant of these various forces in the political, social and ideological life of India today.

Westerners, especially Anglo-Saxons, are usually prepared to consider any part of the world that is posing a problem : any area that may give them an opportunity to release that deeply ingrained instinct "do-goodism". Not long ago, India was a problem country. Today, apart from occasional references to Kashmir or Goa, it is not. If we turn our attention to India today, it is not primarily to consider how to solve her problems for her. (She has problems, in plenty, just as other countries have them ; but India herself is actively trying to solve them, without asking for or waiting for outside assistance.) We may usefully turn to India, not to offer help, but to seek for it. Perhaps India can help in solving some of the world's most pressing problems. It is not easy to persuade the educated westerner to regard such a proposition seriously. An enlightened Jew of two

thousand years ago is recorded as asking, with an air of condescension : “ Can any good come out of Nazareth ? ” Many enlightened westerners of today have already said in their hearts : “ Can any good come out of India ? ” and they have answered the question. Of course, much depends on the definition of “ good ”. If you are looking for even more dazzlingly brilliant analyses of the predicament of modern man, or an even gloomier prophecy of the plight of the world in 1984, or for anything whose chief if not sole qualities are cleverness and bitter wit, or even if you are looking for fresh intellectual exercises in pure theory or more art for art’s sake, then perhaps India is not the place to go on such a quest. But if wholeness of life is desired, then India has much more to offer than can possibly be indicated in the pages that follow. I cannot say, like the disciple of old : “ Come and see ” ; but at least I will ask the reader, if he cannot conveniently go and explore for himself, to use his imagination, and discarding any prejudices he may have, to think and ponder.

As far as possible, I have tried to let some of the wisest Indians of this generation speak for themselves ; and this includes, of course, allowing them to say things I do not endorse. When a wise Indian, not prejudiced against the West or against Christianity, draws attention to what seem to him to be defects in our western or Christian way of life, it is useful to listen to him, and to see what we may learn from him, even if we find his criticism unduly harsh or one-sided. My task, as an interpreter, is to report faithfully, not to gloss over or explain away what may be unpalatable.

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Short titles to books can be misleading. When I invite the reader to *Consider India* I am not, of course, asking him to applaud every aspect of the life of India today. This is no guide-book to modern India, her life and customs. To use a geological simile, I am asking the reader to examine a few of the strata that contain, as I believe, rich veins of pure metal, whose careful mining may help to redeem the world from its present reliance on what can best be termed a paper currency. Many of the strata that compose the Indian soil contain no obviously valuable ore ; but some few, I am persuaded, contain gold of the finest quality.

In writing this essay, I have been thinking chiefly of possible western readers ; but I hope it may be of interest also to some Indians to see what aspects of their life and thought make the strongest appeal to one who has learnt to love their land and its ancient heritage. Especially today, when many of my Indian friends seem impatient that twelve years of independence have not yet brought them to the land of promise of which they have dreamed, I should like to think that these chapters may help to reassure them that forces of healing and harmony are visibly at work in their land, even though they may not make much show to those who judge chiefly by the headlines in the daily press.

I am indebted to the following for permission to quote from their writings or publications : Professor E. A. Burtt, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, Mr. K. G. Saiyidain, Sardar Tarlok Singh, Miss Marjorie Sykes, Mr. Philip Zealey, Messrs. Orient Longmans.

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H. G. A.

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CHAPTER I

THE RE-BIRTH OF ANCIENT INDIA

INDEPENDENT INDIA has drawn her symbolism from two periods of history : from the latest age, or the age of Gandhi ; and from over two thousand years ago, from the age of Buddha. Why should India, in which Hinduism has been the prevailing religion for thousands of years, seek to found a new age on the teaching of the Buddha rather than on the Vedas ? Partly, perhaps, because the chief architects of the new India are determined to build a secular State. To Mr. Nehru and his colleagues the arch-enemy, so far at least, has been communalism, not communism ; the arch-enemies have been those whose response to the demand of Mr. Jinnah and his followers for Pakistan, the land of pure Islam, is to create a land of pure Hinduism, under the battle-cry, “ back to the Vedas ” ; they would seek to revert to an India from which all foreign influences are excluded, whether from Islam or Christendom, whether from communist Russia or free-enterprise America or welfare-state Britain, or China or anywhere else. There are men in India today who would like to see India once again dominated by the Brahmins, by pure Brahminism ; they would re-establish caste with all its rigidity ; they would exclude all modern industrialism. Fifteen hundred years ago the

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Brahmins drove the Buddhists and Buddhism out of India. Today, there are those who would similarly destroy all the democratic and levelling tendencies which they associate with the name of Gandhi. It is hardly surprising that those who have been followers of Gandhi see in the Buddha his great Indian predecessor.

This does not mean, however, that the new India intends to restore Buddhist prayer-flags and prayer-wheels to every village. What goes by the name of popular Buddhism in the Buddhist countries is not what attracts them. It is the teaching of the Buddha which appears to many of modern India's most cultured and most progressive leaders to be profoundly true and perfectly relevant to the context of the twentieth century.¹ The Buddhism that they believe in is not an exclusive religion ; it does not seek to convert or to drive out the adherents of other faiths.

The emphasis must be on the teaching of the Buddha as it is re-interpreted. The West commonly thinks of Buddhism as an atheistical religion ; a religion of pessimism ; a religion that proclaims final annihilation of human personality as the goal to be desired and sought after. Modern interpreters of Gautama Buddha deny this ; Buddha, it is said, did not deny God, but he warned his disciples that speculations or theological discussions about the nature of God do not help men to live rightly ; nor is essential Buddhism pessimistic : rather, it faces

¹ There is also, without doubt, a bogus kind of neo-Buddhism in India today, which has received some government support, and which, for instance, makes great play with the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's birth. This may be more conspicuous even than the rational rediscovery of the Buddha's teaching that I am referring to ; but there is no more of real religion in it than there is any honest Christianity in, for instance, printing " In God we trust " on American postage stamps.

the harsh facts of life, evil, sorrow, pain, misery ; and then it proceeds to open the way by which man can rise above these crushing burdens into a life of knowledge and tranquillity, harmony and inner peace. *Nirvana* does not mean annihilation ; rather it means the total extinction of self-love and selfish desire. It is when man, filled with love and pity for his fellow-men and for all living beings, has no room left in his mind or heart for selfish greed that he finds knowledge of the truth — the truth that he is not a lonely animal, doomed to live in the misery of isolation, but that he is part of a whole and can learn to live in harmony with the whole creation. What Christians call “ union with God ”, Buddha calls *Nirvana*. *Nirvana* is perfect harmony of the one with the whole, of each with all. Metaphorically, this may be described as the reunion of a drop of water with the ocean, which does indeed suggest the extinction of individuality ; but it is not annihilation. The ocean remains ; it consists for ever of water. But metaphors are only metaphors. Moreover, though man cannot live purposefully from day to day without some goal for all his striving, it would seem contrary to the whole emphasis of Buddha’s teaching to speculate on the exact nature of *Nirvana*. We may only be able to describe it in negatives ; but that does not mean that it is absolute negation. It is the condition in which sorrow and pain cease : what matters most is that, whatever the goal of his striving may be, man’s actions today and every day should conform to the goal he is striving to approach. Let him today and every day abandon lust, ill-will, delusion, wrath, spite, pride. Let him show love and pity, purity, courage, patience and joy today. A life given to selfish pleasures and lusts is vapid, ignoble and profitless ; on the other hand, a life given

to self-mortification is painful, ignoble and profitless. A healthy, sane life lived for the service of men in love for the whole creation provides the true mean. Do not seek to acquire things for yourself and for your own family alone ; seek rather to share, to give, to abandon the lust for possessions. Buddha did not preach “ vanity of vanities, all is vanity ”. He did not call men to withdraw from the world. His words were words of life and action. “ Earnest among the thoughtless, awake among the sleepers, the wise man advances like a race-horse, leaving behind the hack.”

First, the wise man must conquer his own wayward passions, the snare of the senses, for these are the source of all pain and evil. “ If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greater conqueror.” Such conquest will never come to the indolent or slothful man : “ If anything is to be done, let a man do it, let him attack it vigorously.” The man who has conquered self will not be overcome by hatred or envy. “ We live happily indeed, not hating those who hate us ; among men who hate us we live free from hatred.” But this inner tranquillity is not due to indifference to the world. In the strength of his own self-conquest, man must fight and overcome evil : “ Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good ; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.” “ As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, wise people falter not amidst praise or blame.” “ One who does his duty is tolerant like the earth, or like a threshold ; he is like a lake without mud His thought is quiet, quiet are his word and deed, when he has obtained freedom by true knowledge, when he has thus become a quiet man.”

“Company with the wise is pleasure, like meeting with kinsfolk. Therefore one ought to follow the wise, the intelligent, the learned, the much enduring, the dutiful, the elect ; one ought to follow such a good and wise man, as the moon follows the path of the stars.”

Here are some Buddhist beatitudes, verses which seem to give the very essence of a life that can bring healing to the world :

Not to serve the foolish, but to serve the wise ;
To honour those worthy of honour—this is the greatest blessing.

Much insight and education, self-control and pleasant speech,
And whatever word be well-spoken—this is the greatest blessing.

To live righteously, to give help to kindred,
To follow a peaceful calling—this is the greatest blessing.

To be long-suffering and meek, to abhor and cease from evil,
Not to be weary in well-doing—this is the greatest blessing.

To be gentle, to be patient under reproof,
To be charitable, to act virtuously—this is the greatest blessing.

Reverence and humility, contentment and gratitude,
To be pure, to be temperate—this is the greatest blessing.

To dwell in a pleasant land with right desires of the heart,
To bear the remembrance of good deeds—this is the greatest blessing.

Beneath the strokes of life's changes, the mind that shaketh not,
Without grief or passion—this is the greatest blessing.

On every side are invincible they who do acts like these,
On every side they walk in safety—and theirs is the greatest blessing.

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The story of the Buddha is familiar : of the young Prince who, according to the story, first saw grief and pain when a flying swan,² shot by his cousin's arrow, fell beside him, and he plucked the arrow from the wound and healed it. Then, when his cousin claimed the bird as his, Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha to be, refused to surrender it, and a priest, called to intervene, declared : " If life be aught, the saviour of a life owns more the living thing than he can own who sought to slay it — the slayer spoils and wastes, the cherisher sustains." So began a life of renunciation of power and privilege and wealth, a life consumed by tenderness and compassion for all who suffer, a life which gave the world a teaching that has brought solace to millions, and which promises to save man from the endless wheel of pain and death.

Gandhi had this to say about the assertion that the Buddha denied the existence of God, and on the meaning of *Nirvana* :

I have heard it contended times without number and I have read in books claiming to express the spirit of Buddhism that Buddha did not believe in God. In my humble opinion such a belief contradicts the very central fact of Buddha's teaching. . . . The confusion has arisen over his rejection and just rejection of

² Perhaps it should be noted that swans do not occur in a wild state in India. It is improbable that they did so 2500 years ago. If the Buddha's cousin shot a white bird, it is likely to have been an egret of some kind. So speculates the ornithologist. But a happy chance brings to my eye a note in the obituary columns of *The Times* (some day in spring, 1958) in which a friend of the late Dr. Vogel, Professor Emeritus of the University of Leiden, observes inter alia, that " in a paper read in London some years ago . . . he proved with much humour and learning that this bird (*Hamsa* of Indian legend and art) is not the swan of English translators but the bar-headed goose, a much more graceful and respectable animal ". More graceful than a swan ? However that may be, it appears that in future the legend of the Buddha must tell us that his cousin shot a bar-headed goose. Swan, or even egret, somehow sounds better.

all the base things that passed in his generation under the name of God. He undoubtedly rejected the notion that a being called God was actuated by malice, could repent of his actions, and like the kings of the earth could possibly be open to temptations and bribes and could possibly have favourites. His whole soul rose in mighty indignation against the belief that a being called God required for his satisfaction the living blood of animals in order that he might be pleased—animals that were His own creation. He, therefore, reinstated God, in the right place, and dethroned the usurper who for the time being seemed to occupy the White Throne. He emphasised and re-declared the eternal and unalterable existence of the moral government of this universe. He unhesitatingly said that the Law was God Himself.

God's laws are eternal and unalterable and not separable from God Himself. It is an indispensable condition of His very perfection. And hence the great confusion that Buddha disbelieved in God and simply believed in the moral law, and because of this confusion about God himself arose the confusion about the proper understanding of the great word *nirvana*. *Nirvana* is undoubtedly not utter extinction. So far as I have been able to understand the central fact of Buddha's life, *nirvana* is utter extinction of all that is base in us, all that is vicious in us, all that is corrupt and corruptible in us. *Nirvana* is not like the black, dead peace of the grave, but the living peace, the living happiness of a soul which is conscious of itself, and conscious of having found its own abode in the heart of the eternal.³

The Buddha has also been acclaimed in recent times as the first great Indian exponent of *ahimsa*, or harmlessness, a term which in the West has become inseparably connected with Gandhi. In this sense, therefore, the Buddha is linked with Gandhi. But a recent Indian writer comments on this view, and puts it into a truer perspective. Dr. Satkari Mookerjee observes :

³ *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

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Ahimsa was a commonplace tenet of Indian religion, irrespective of the difference of religious sects and communities. . . . The Buddha revolutionized the concept of *ahimsa* by his rational approach. He laid exclusive emphasis upon the purity of motive. He always insisted upon the necessity of cleansing the mind of baser instincts and impulses. Freedom from animal passions, such as greed, anger and self-glorification, was made by him the foundation of spiritual progress. He did not attach undue importance to outward practices even if they appeared to have a sinister colour and look. . . . The Buddha enriched and elevated the concept of *ahimsa* by making it the exponent of love and compassion. It became a positive virtue and not a negative attitude. *Ahimsa* is the outward manifestation of love and compassion. The following words of the Buddha may be quoted : “ Just as in the night when the dawn is breaking, the morning star shines out in radiance and glory, just so all the means that can be used as helps towards doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love.”⁴

It must not be thought that the modern emphasis on the Buddha's life of compassion is a wholly new interpretation. It is rather a re-statement of the Mahayana Buddhist religious ideal. Professor E. A. Burtt, one of the best American Buddhist scholars of today, thus interprets Mahayana Buddhism :

When the Mahayana Buddhists look back upon their Master, what they primarily see is the princely heir of pomp, luxury and power, who gave these up not merely for his own peace but in pity for suffering mankind—for the sake of the truth that might save all—and the Buddha who upon attaining enlightenment refused to hug his great discovery to himself but devoted the rest of his life to sharing with others the way to enduring happiness that he had found. And they were confident that his loving

⁴ Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, November 1956, p. 249.

dedication and devoted sharing were involved in the very realization of enlightenment—if he had not shown this sense of compassionate oneness with others, that would prove that he was still caught in the web of self-seeking *tanna* and had not achieved the love which is the culminating mark of true spiritual perfection. The basic conviction of Mahayana at this point is the conviction beautifully expressed in John G. Whittier's little poem "The Meeting":

He findeth not who seeks his own ;
The soul is lost that's saved alone.

Similarly, "A Bodhisattva (i.e. a Buddhist devotee of the highest rank) is one who, having attained the goal of purification and emancipation, refuses to enter *Nirvana*, out of devoted love for those who still remain behind and a consuming zeal to help them."⁵

These few paragraphs do not represent — they could not represent — the whole essence of Buddhism. But the aspects of the Buddha's teaching here emphasised seem to be those that are inspiring men and women in India today. If we may fairly speak of a Buddhist renaissance in India, it is a renaissance of the spirit of compassion for all creatures, of universal brotherhood, of the gospel of selfless service.

Asoka, the great Buddhist Emperor, has also risen out of the mists of a forgotten age to tower again above modern India. If the Buddha's teaching concerns itself chiefly with the right motives for individual action in daily life, Asoka, as a ruler, has something special to say to the social century in which we live: to a century in which most men think in terms less of good and bad men than of good and bad social and political systems.

⁵ *The Compassionate Buddha* by E. A. Burtt, Mentor Religious Classics, pp. 125-7.

Asoka was a conqueror ; but he became a convert to pacifism, or to something very near it. Not only did he repudiate conquest and the rule of force, but his rock edicts call on men to refrain from all slaughter, both of human beings and of animals. To the western mind, his insistence on the social duty of sinking wells and of planting trees may seem unimportant and secondary ; but anyone who has lived in sun-baked India knows that even today these are the foundations of a sound economy. Only the village that has deep wells can survive seasons of drought ; only the village that has good forests and avenues of trees has an assurance of shade for all wayfarers from the heat of the sun, fuel for cooking, natural manure for replenishing the soil, and natural resistance to soil erosion in times of storm and flood. A rural economy built on an assured water-supply and plentiful forests can lead to prosperous village communities. When these foundations of national economy fail, man becomes the enemy of his neighbour in the desperate effort to keep alive. Asoka had a much surer eye, it seems, to rural well-being than Karl Marx and other modern writers who cannot see beyond the roofs of the cities in which they have been nurtured. The Indian economy that may be significant for the twentieth century will not be a pale copy of the latest western technology, whether capitalist or socialist, with its attention fixed on cities and factories and industries and gadgets. Free India, through her Five-Year Plans and in other ways, is giving primary attention to the primary producer, the man of the soil, the villager. Half a million healthy village republics are to be the solid foundation for the new India ; there can be no other. For such an India, with a firm-based natural economy,

self-sufficient in the necessities of life, food, clothing and housing, Asoka still has a message. The age of Asoka will not return ; but a twentieth century renewal of such a realm as Asoka's principles tended to create would be a demonstration to all the world of a sound social structure.

Two or three centuries after Asoka's death, there came from the mind of an unknown philosopher-saint an inspired writing of the rarest quality, known to the world as the Bhagavad Gita. Although the Brahmins of a later age drove the Buddhists out of India, the modern tendency to treat Hinduism and Buddhism as distinct and mutually incompatible religious systems is misleading. The religious language of the Buddhist scriptures is just as characteristically Hindu as the Christian scriptures are Jewish ; much of Buddhist thought is identical with much Hindu thought ; and the Bhagavad Gita, which, as far as is known, was first put into its present form during the period when Buddhism flourished in India, seems from its content to be a fruitful union of the best thought and aspiration of Buddhism with the profound insights of the earlier Vedas.

The Gita has no doubt had a sustaining influence on many Indians through twenty centuries ; but it is only during the past few generations that it has become, to all intents and purposes, the central Hindu scripture. It may well be that this is due in part to the impact on the religious mind of India of the reading of the New Testament and in general the influence of the social emphasis of the West ; this aspect will be considered in the next chapter. Here, we are concerned to examine the chief content of this remarkable book.

In recent times the Gita has been translated into English by a number of competent scholars. There is

Barnett's *Lord's Song*, Thomas' *The Song of the Lord*, Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial*, a translation by Annie Besant, and recent translations by Paramananda, Radhakrishnan and others. Dr. Radhakrishnan has added a very full and learned commentary. There is also *The Gita according to Gandhi*. Gandhi translated it into English during one of his prison sentences, and his secretary, Mahadev Desai, added a scholarly introduction. Arnold's *Song Celestial* is the translation I know best ; Gandhi declared that its metrical form conveyed to the English reader the spirit of the original better than any other translation known to him. When an attempt is being made to convey the full force of a great religious poem, form is hardly less important than substance. In what follows I am also indebted to a most fresh and limpid running commentary, *Bhagavad Gita, abridged and explained*, by C. Rajagopalachari. He calls it a beginner's handbook. I am happy to be a beginner, to dig in the garden of the Gita under Mr. Rajagopalachari's direction, and I hope my readers will be similarly content.

The Gita takes the form of a dialogue between Arjuna, the warrior-hero, who sees his kinsfolk about to slaughter one another in the battle of Kurukshetra, and the deity personified by Krishna. Arjuna is first of all concerned with the problem of killing. Can it be right that a man should kill his brother ? Krishna's reply to these opening questions and agonies of conscience on the part of Arjuna is not very convincing to the modern mind ; but Mr. Rajagopalachari justly observes that : " the context has rightly receded into insignificance . . . we shall fail to understand the teaching aright if we are obsessed by the particular scene and seek to interpret the general by the particular. It is common practice in Sanskrit literature

to provide great works with such or other prologues We should forget the battle-scene when we study the Gita as a scripture of Sanatana Dharma ” — or, let us say, a treatise on the true way of life.

In a few pages it is manifestly impossible to do justice to the profound insights and philosophical majesty of the Gita as a whole ; all that can be attempted here is a summary of certain salient teachings which may have a special significance for the life of mankind today.

In contrast to what is commonly supposed in the West to be characteristic of Hindu thought, the Gita does not commend the way of renunciation or the way of meditation as superior to the way of action. Indeed, its central teaching seeks to show that the two ways must be brought into harmony. “ The Gita emphasises that the activities of the world must go on. The good man does the tasks to which he is called and which appertain to his place in society. In all his activities, he does things like others outwardly ; but inwardly he maintains a spirit of detachment. He does everything without selfish motive, and maintains equilibrium of mind in success and failure, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Purified thus, the good man is qualified for further progress by constant meditation, prayer and devotion, and finally he ‘ sees himself in everything and everything in God ’. Yoga consists in living this dedicated life in the midst of worldly affairs.”⁶

Again, “ There is true renunciation in right action. What we should renounce is not action, but selfish desire.”⁷

⁶ *Bhagavad Gita, abridged and explained* by C. Rajagopalachari, p. 47.

⁷ Loc. cit.

How simple it sounds, yet how unobtainable it is ! To control the mind and the senses so that one acts in total disregard of the immediate fruits of action is the hardest lesson for man to learn. "The rebellious nature of the senses is such that even in a man who knows and who is sincerely striving they are apt violently to carry away his mind."

"When a man allows his mind to muse on the objects of sense-enjoyments, an attraction for them is created. Attraction develops into craving, and from craving follow causes for anger. Anger produces delusion. Delusion confuses the memory and understanding of things ; from this confusion of understanding follows the disintegration of the power of discrimination ; with discrimination gone the man perishes."⁸

Arjuna asks : "Impelled by what, does a man commit sin, as it were by force constrained, though he does not wish, indeed, to be a sinful man?" Krishna replies : "It is desire. It is anger. It is born out of the principle of passion in nature, insatiable and all-polluting. Know it as our enemy here on earth. . . . This perpetual enemy of the wise, this insatiable and unquenchable foe, desire, surrounds and holds the understanding a prisoner. . . . There are three gateways to hell, by which one's self-ruin is brought about — lust, anger and greed ; therefore, let these three be renounced."

This does not mean, however, a complete mortification of the body. It is not suggested that a man who gives himself to the contemplation of natural beauty has thereby lost his self-control and his ability to reason soundly. He is not called on to renounce the joys of

⁸ Ibid., pp. 62-3.

music or drama, or of artistic creation. "The objects of sense-enjoyment" which so easily lure man to destruction are those that tend towards lust — lust of possession, lust of ambition — that "last infirmity of noble minds". Selfish desire : this is the arch enemy ; for as long as a man has human needs and appetites, such as hunger and thirst, some elements of desire will remain with him. But every man knows that when he is completely absorbed in some task, in something that fulfils his whole nature, he can for hours together forget even to be hungry and thirsty. So, if he gives himself utterly to his life's work, with no thought, no hidden desire, for personal reward, no subtle complacency of self-righteousness, then he is on the road to salvation from the handicaps of lust, anger and greed.

Some translations of the Gita warn man against the attachment of "love". Unfortunately, the word "love" has half a dozen different meanings in English. Mr. Rajagopalachari uses the word "lust". Probably the real meaning is something rather wider than "lust" in its usual sense. "Selfish love" is perhaps as near to the sense of the original as we can get. If one thinks of mother-love, often the purest self-giving love that can be imagined, and a sentiment without which the animal creation could hardly have survived, it is still true that it can be utterly spoilt when it becomes possessive, so that the parent seeks to possess and dominate her child. "Love and do as you like", said St. Augustine ; but that can only mean : Abandon every selfish desire, lose yourself in caring for others ; be so sensitive to the thoughts and moods of others that there is no room left for self-assertion — then, but only then, you can do as you like ; for the things you would then like to do will be the

performance of your best life-work, the fulfilment of service for God and man.

Selfless action, however, is not the whole of life. The Gita has much more to say. Selfish desire is not banished simply by a life of ceaseless activity. Man's life is not so simple. He cannot so easily escape from his baser nature. He must know himself ; otherwise the baser, self-regarding desires, working in the depths of the sub-conscious mind, will again and again deceive him. At this point modern psychology confirms the insight of oriental religion. The typical western extroverted man passes through life believing that he is giving himself in devoted service to his fellows, when too often he is subtly feeding his own vanity. Given to good works, he is nevertheless obstinate, unimaginative, assertive, dominating ; those who work with him must constantly consider his reactions to all that they may do ; he becomes easily embittered, unyielding, in a word he shows himself full of inner pride. He dare not look within because he knows that his inner heart is completely out of accord with his outward activities. So he dismisses all self-examination as weakness and unhealthy introspection. And all his friends and neighbours suffer. The Gita, like other oriental wisdom, teaches that, before a man can undertake pure and truly selfless action, he must know himself. He must be willing to explore all the dark and disgraceful corners of his own heart. " He whose pleasure is within himself, who derives joy within himself, who has a shining light within himself, that Yogi attains final liberation and is absorbed in Brahma (the eternal). . . . With senses, mind and intellect ever under control, absorbed in the pursuit of final liberation, the sage, free from desire, fear and anger, is, indeed, already liberated."

“Liberated?” the active western mind may echo. Do I want to be liberated? Yes, surely; it is western man, especially, who needs liberation from weakness, frustration and disappointment, or from a sense of failure or lack of significance; from fears, open or secret; or it may be from the subtleties of hidden vanity and self-love. Self-knowledge is, in fact, the way from immaturity to maturity. Many illiterate and poor Indian villagers are more mature as persons than their western city counterparts, who have wealth, knowledge of the kind that can be acquired through books, technical skills and the other attributes of western civilization.

The Gita shows man the way to live a complete and satisfying life. There are books in the West which purport to tell their readers “How to make friends”. Those who really want the answer to this riddle should read the Gita and some other eastern books of wisdom. They are much more likely to find the key here. Those who have watched Indian mothers with their children and then compared them with many fretful, ill-tempered, ineffective western mothers, may be tempted to say: “These Indian women have learnt an ancient wisdom which we of the West seem to have lost, or have never learnt. We had better sit at their feet for a generation.”

The attainment of Yoga or inner peace does not demand alarming exercises in ruthless physical posturing. The essential laws of liberation are simple: “Yoga is not for him who eats too much, nor for one who absolutely abstains from food; it is not for him who is too much addicted to sleep, nor is it to be attained by keeping vigils.” Rather: “With internal calm, fearless, firm in the vow of Brahmacharya (self-control or dedication), the mind well governed, thinking of Me,

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let him sit harmonised and absorbed in attaining Me.”

Here is the picture of the true Yoga : “ He who has no hatred, and is a friend of all living things, full of compassion, without the feeling of ‘I’ or ‘Mine’, balanced in pleasure and pain, and ever forbearing.”

And what, it may be asked, has all this to do with the problems of our time, the conquest of poverty, the abolition of war, the creation of one world ? Can the wisdom of ancient India give us techniques for these impelling problems of our society ? What is the use of highly moral, detached lives if we are all to be blown to bits or see the world destroyed and our own bodies disintegrate through the torture of hydrogen bombs, or if we are to be liquidated for refusal to conform to the demands of an authoritarian State ?

The wisdom of ancient India, as also of every great religion which has sustained the lives of millions through the centuries, is in fact highly relevant to the sickness of our world order. The chief needs of mankind today, in the social world, are no doubt the creation of an effective world federation, the break-up of the almighty nation State and of huge economic corporations that now dominate human life, so that local groups of men can function in smaller units with a much fuller autonomy and greater opportunity for variety than can be found in most parts of the world. But why are these things so hard to build ? It is not simply that we are slow to escape from the climate of national self-sufficiency and authoritarianism. These difficulties arise in our own minds, mainly because we are not truly educated. The educational processes in most parts of the world consist almost entirely in intellectual training and the culture of

the body ; the inner mind of the sub-conscious and the senses of man are out of control ; so that, under a veneer of what is called education, the inner man remains more or less of a brute. It may be partly because we have not learnt to control our senses and the hidden springs of our actions that we cannot yet build the structure of society which alone will fit the closely knit world in which we live. Maturity of mind, including the conquest of selfish desire, may indeed be the only possible road towards a harmonious world society.

Many westerners are suspicious of " oriental wisdom " because they think of it in terms of metaphysical speculation, or in terms of dogmatic religion or gross superstition. The Buddha, it will be admitted, was a very great saint ; the Bhagavad Gita is a very remarkable book. But in what sense can the Gita be said to represent India ? Is not India more truly represented by curious notions about the transmigration of souls, or by the blood-streams of the Kali temple in Calcutta ? That these elements exist in the great body of Hinduism cannot be denied. But Hindu India does not demand from all who seek wisdom from her that they shall accept any doctrine of transmigration or that they shall become worshippers of Kali. The doctrine of transmigration appears to be a widely accepted speculative attempt to answer the baffling question why some human beings are condemned, it may be from birth, to lives of pain and sorrow and suffering, whilst others seem to have all the luck. Why do some die in babyhood, whilst others endure a prolonged and pitiful decay in senility ? Some people, as we say, are born under a lucky star (an astrological speculation), some under an unlucky one. This problem will continue to perplex the human mind. Perhaps it is

insoluble. In any case Hindu wisdom does not demand acceptance of transmigration as the only possible answer. Hinduism is perhaps the least dogmatic and the most tolerant of religions.

Not many westerners will be attracted to a religion or a philosophy that expresses itself in the worship of innumerable deities or in the animal sacrifices of a Kali temple or in other rank superstitions. But, here again, though the extraordinary tolerance of Hinduism permits these things and is prepared to say that they may signify something of value for those who cherish them, the kind of Hinduism, better perhaps called Vedanta, which demands a hearing in the world today, is not concerned to justify these things.

Let us again attend to Mr. Rajagopalachari, whose recent book *Hinduism : Doctrine and Way of Life* may help us to see what is the outlook of an educated Indian of our age who still adheres to the Hindu tradition.

Mr. Rajagopalachari sees as one of the gravest sicknesses of our time the divorce between religious dogma and the scientific method. But he sees nothing in the disciplines of the physical sciences which are at variance with the religion of *Vedanta*. "Acceptance of the scientific method", he writes, "is not a defeat for religion, but is acceptance of the sovereignty of truth which is only an aspect of religion. It is a correct view of religion that it can never be out of harmony with science."

How does Vedanta reconcile science and religion? "According to the Bhagavad Gita, the sovereignty of God is exercised in and through the unchangeable law of cause and effect, that is through what we call the laws of nature.

“ ‘ All this world is pervaded by Me in form unmanifest ; all things abide in Me, but I stand apart from them. And yet beings are not rooted in Me. Behold the scheme of my sovereignty ! Myself the origin and the support of beings yet standing apart from them. Using nature which is Mine own, I create again and again all this multitude of beings, keeping them dependent on nature. In the scheme of My sovereignty, nature brings forth the moving and the unmoving, and in consequence of this, the world evolves.’

“ Vedanta ”, continues Mr. Rajagopalachari, “ postulates that the universe is the result of a gradual unfolding of the creative power inherent in primordial substance.”

This description of God as the “ first cause ” in an evolving universe, a God who is both immanent and transcendent, is hardly different from the theology of liberal Christians. On the other hand, in India as in the West there is today a good deal of frightened obscurantism that fights against a scientific religious philosophy so free from ancient dogma. The liberal Christian tradition is today under something of a cloud ; a fresh breeze of liberal Hinduism may help to disperse the cloud, so that the sun of true wisdom can shine again upon the world, putting all the dark forces of dogmatism to flight.

There is a second and no less serious inner discord that defeats man’s effort to live in harmony with himself and the world. Mr. Rajagopalachari formulates it thus :

As for the contradictions between religion and that class of worldly activities of intelligent men called politics, the divergence is even greater than that between science and religion. It is indeed a miracle that earnest Christians preserve both their faith and their psychological health under the conditions of current national and

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international activities. The State permits, aids and abets the wholesale infringement of what is daily read and formally taught as the word of Christ. Yet, almost all the citizens of the State profess religion and believe themselves to be Christians.⁹ They duly celebrate Christian rites and festivals. The reign of relentless private competition, the right to make maximum private profit at the expense of others and the exploitation of every advantage got by accident or acquired by enterprise, so that the difference between man and man may grow in geometric progression, are all plain denials of Christ. For the execution of deep-laid plans based on the so-called fundamental right to private competition, gigantic corporations equal in respectability to the Church and far richer, grander and more impressive manifestations are established under the authority and protection of democratic States. Yet, almost every citizen of those States is a Christian or belongs to some other faith equally opposed to inequality and exploitation.⁹ The anti-spiritual significance of the hypocrisy generated by such contradictions is tremendous. Civilization must crumble corroded by this contradiction if nothing were done to avert the catastrophe.

It may be argued that this is an exaggeration, that there are many individuals who are faithful to their professions and who continually protest against the misuse of wealth and power. A great deal of dissent is no doubt honestly and bravely expressed in every country against the neglect of religious principles. Even war in just causes is opposed and the volume of pacifist literature may be considered as standing proof of the validity of the plea. But this dissent of individuals is allowed to be expressed only because it does not materially interfere with the existing order. It even serves in its own way as an ally of the dominant hypocrisy, for by providing a vent and an escape for guilty conscience, it relieves the pressure and allows the crime to continue.

What has Vedanta to say here? Mr. Rajagopalachari claims that "a code of ethics and a system of values were evolved by Hindu philosophers out of the religious

⁹ Probably a larger proportion of westerners have abandoned all profession of Christian faith than Mr. Rajagopalachari realises.

philosophy known as Vedanta, which is not only consistent with science, but is admirably suited to be a spiritual basis for the more just and stable organisation that good people all over the world desire and are working for."

Mr. Rajagopalachari goes on to argue that, in most countries, the kind of social organisation that "good people all over the world desire" is being imposed by State authority against the will of a powerful and reluctant minority, or in some cases by the ruthless destruction of that minority. What is really needed is a generally accepted conviction that equitable distribution among all is preferable to unmitigated economic competition; that the welfare of all is more desirable than the wealth of the few, even if you and I happen to be among the few. In the 1920's J. M. Keynes (as he then was), when he visited Russia, observed that the Russians were developing a new religion that despises wealth. But unfortunately both in the communist world and in the capitalist world there is a prevailing conviction that cupidity is so deeply ingrained in human nature that the only way to prevent a few clever rascals from becoming immensely wealthy is by stern State action. Man, in other words, is held to be essentially selfish, and nothing but the terrors of severe punishment under a system of rigid State law will restrain him. Mr. Rajagopalachari denies this. He believes that the same, or rather a much more effective, restraint, can be built from within man. Vedanta and the Bhagavad Gita, he suggests, provide just such an incentive to a social way of life. Those who genuinely accept this teaching will no longer make the accumulation of wealth the chief aim of their life. Where such a philosophy is accepted, there will be no need for Government to impose economic equality by force. "The

profit-motive and the civic right of private competition were definitely discarded in what was laid down as the Vedanta's way of life. This, as clearly set forth in the Bhagavad Gita, is that man must fulfil social duty and work according to capacity and not for profit. . . . The way of life taught in this living spring of Hindu ethics is based expressly on the equal dignity and sacredness of every form of labour that falls to one's lot. All work, it reiterates with solemn emphasis, should be done honestly and disinterestedly for welfare of the community and not for the satisfaction of personal desires. Indeed, the Gita lays down in a unique manner the whole socialist doctrine by characterizing work as a religious offering in the true sense."

It must be recognised, however, that the extremes of wealth and poverty, and the love of accumulating and displaying vast wealth and costly magnificence, are as manifest today in India as in any other country — indeed, they are far more blatant than in parts of western Europe. The caste system, perhaps even the teaching of the Gita itself, have been so interpreted by many of the merchant class as to mean that the merchant, the trader, the manufacturer, is performing the natural duty of his caste if he gives himself wholeheartedly to accumulating all the wealth and profit that he can. There is, however, this difference between India and the West. Though an Indian merchant can be as single-minded and as ruthless in his pursuit of wealth as the most ruthless westerner, yet it still happens in India that at the age of fifty or sixty he may hand over his business to his sons and become a poor mendicant. In other words, wealth is not his god; so he may yet be open to the conviction that accumulation of wealth is itself a sin against God, or

against the true nature of man. The astonishing success that Vinoba Bhave seems to be achieving in his Land-Gifts Mission, as described in a later chapter, provides some evidence that the nature of some rapacious Indians can be changed without recourse to coercive law, when a powerful appeal in the name of God is made to them.

All this can be compared with the state of mind prevalent in Europe during the Middle Ages, when usury was considered to be a crime against God, and when even hard-headed business men were less inclined to disobey what they believed to be God's laws than what they knew to be the law of the State. Such a mentality is not impossible. The sanctions required to convince man today that wealth is criminal will not be the same that they were in Europe a thousand years ago, or even what they may be in many parts of India today. But what is happening in India may at least assure us of the possibility of such a total change of outlook.

Has Vedanta anything relevant to say about the problem of power? Is the lust for power contrary to the teaching of Vedanta? Has India a way of life, a code of morals, a philosophy, to offer mankind which will lead him to renounce the pursuit of power and to despise the mighty ruler of super-states and vast economic corporations? On this, Mr. Rajagopalachari has nothing to say, directly at least. No doubt it is true that men who are free from all selfish desire will not strive for political position. But this is not the whole of mankind's problem. In a democracy it is doubtful whether men achieve the highest political positions without the incentive of personal ambition; but once they have arrived at positions of the highest authority most of them become dummies, caught up in the vast complex of State power. Their

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struggles to break away from this pattern of life are at the best the vain struggles of a modern Laocoon. The python of State power has such a stranglehold that only a rare man of robust character, a Churchill, a Cripps, perhaps an Eisenhower, can withstand its tentacles. Nothing but mighty spiritual power can break this throttling power of the State. Where can such spiritual power be found ?

The fact seems to be that this is a problem that belongs almost exclusively to the modern world. The coils of the modern python are far more complex and all-embracing than those which confronted the writers of the Mahabharata or the Bible. The teaching of the Gita may seem to do little more than tell the statesman and the soldier to do his job conscientiously and selflessly ; and that might still mean : “ Go on building your stock piles of atom bombs ; that is your job ; and if the awful moment comes when you must use them, remember that the soul of man is indestructible.” If this is the best that India can say to the world today, she has little comfort to offer us. Is it ? To answer that question, we must first look at other aspects of modern India.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTENDOM

WHEN THE Europeans first began trading with India in the sixteenth century, and when, a little later, they began their political penetration, Indian culture appears to have been in a state of eclipse. The Mogul Empire was breaking up in the eighteenth century, and the Hindu faith had already become petrified round the dry bones of a rigid caste system and an ignorant Brahminical tyranny. India was in need of a purge, and it came at the hands of western conquerors and Christian missionaries.

Sardar Panikkar suggests that there are three great Englishmen whose names will endure because of the contribution they have made to India's Renaissance. First, Edmund Burke, though he never visited India, "put an end to a period when moral considerations did not enter into the government of India. Burke's voice, which resounds through history, was raised not solely against the crimes of the East India Company's most distinguished governor-general but it was raised in the interest of justice to the people of India. . . . Burke is the father of the liberal tradition in India."¹

The second name is that of Sir William Jones. "It was through him that the treasures of Indian literature came

¹ *A Survey of Indian History*, p. 256.

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first to be known to the world. . . . The national self-esteem of India which had touched its depths at the end of the eighteenth century received its first aid to recovery in the appreciation which Indian literature received at the hands of the most renowned men of Europe. Jones can well be acclaimed in this sense as one of the fathers of the Great Recovery which followed in the nineteenth century.”²

Lord Macaulay is Sardar Panikkar’s third British immortal. His attitude towards Indian literature and culture was the exact opposite of Sir William Jones’. But, blind though he was to the glories of ancient Indian culture, his insistence on English as the medium of instruction for India in the nineteenth century was the right decision for that moment. Through the medium of English, educated Indians learnt a new sense of unity ; through it they discovered the politics of liberty and democracy ; through it they renewed their vitality with the heritage of Shakespeare and Milton, Wordsworth and Shelley. And Macaulay gave a second gift to India : he gave a majestic new legal code. “ The establishment of the great principle of equality of all before the law, in a country where under the Hindu doctrines a Brahmin could not be punished on the evidence of Sudras (out-castes) and even punishments varied according to caste and where, according to Muslim law, an unbeliever’s testimony could not be accepted against a Muslim, was itself a legal revolution of the first importance The imposing and truly magnificent legal structure of India under whose protection four hundred million people live is indeed a worthy monument to Macaulay’s genius.”³

² op. cit., p. 257.

³ op. cit., p. 258.

But the Christian missionaries, or at least the greatest among them, were the means through which a mightier influence was brought into the life of India. If numbers of converts to the Christian faith were the criterion of success, then the Roman Catholic Church could claim the major achievement. But this is not the true test. Indeed, it could even be argued that the greatest Christian influence on the life of India has come from Christians who have made no attempt whatever to make converts. However that may be, the effects on the life of India of the life and work of Francis Xavier and his Portuguese Catholic successors on the West coast, and of Schwartz and his Lutheran successors in the South, have probably been less in both breadth and depth than the results of the work of William Carey and his colleagues in Bengal. Carey and his colleagues, in the course of forty years, translated the Christian scriptures or parts of them into many different languages of Asia, chiefly Indian. How it came about that the Bible was so little known in India before, in spite of fifteen centuries of Syrian Church life in Malabar, is not easy to understand. But so it was. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, the religious mind of India was permeated with three great religious writings, the Bhagavad Gita, the Koran and the New Testament. And it is possible that the influence, direct or indirect, of the New Testament, was the greatest of all three. The Gita had been a cherished possession for many centuries. The Koran, too, had influenced India for some five centuries. But the New Testament was a new discovery. It came to the perceptive religious mind of India with at least as mighty an impact as the discovery of the Americas has had upon the whole history of Europe. A new world of religion was opened

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before the eyes of those who were craving for some new vitality in the realm of the human spirit. It was in fact an Asian production, though it came to India dressed in a western garb. India was able to find meanings in it which Europe had missed. The coming of the New Testament to India may well have been the greatest event in world history during the past few centuries.

At the very time when the Bible was losing its hold as the main principle of life in the West, it was being discovered, with freshness and vitality, by the receptive mind of India. The effect has been far more profound than any statistics of Christian Church membership would suggest. Bible history and incident, still more the teachings of the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and above all the deathless figure of Jesus Christ himself, have found a ready lodging in the minds and hearts of so many Indians that today these things belong to the furniture, indeed, the very texture, of the minds of millions who do not call themselves Christians ; they have become an integral part of the cultural and religious heritage of India.

In the magazine of an American evangelical Christian Mission, I find the following words, under the title “ Uncounted Fruit in India ” :

There are not nearly as many counted Christians as should be expected. But who of us can measure the penetration of light and its consequent reduction of darkness ? Who knows how many of the secret believers shall be among that great throng “ which no man could number of all nations ” ?

This is not due only to the circulation of the Bible. Mission schools and colleges, especially some of the outstanding colleges, have influenced the minds of a

great proportion of India's present leaders in politics, in business and in other professions. To the westerner who lives in India it is startling to discover how often some leading Indian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Parsi, will refer to his life in a Christian college with deep gratitude both for the moral and mental atmosphere he imbibed and for the devoted service and friendship of one or more of the Christian teachers. He has seen no reason to change his religious allegiance ; he prefers to try and do the will of God rather than to call Jesus, " Lord, Lord " with his lips ; he is attempting to incorporate the truth he learnt during his college life ; he has often succeeded in absorbing the New Testament teaching quite as well as many western students who have passed through schools and colleges in the West where the Christian religion is taken for granted. Indian college life, with its insistence on memorising texts and passing examinations (or at the least undergoing the torture of sitting for them) is often a pitiful sham from the point of view of true education. But for many students who have been in Christian colleges, the contact with Christian men of integrity, including the best of the missionary scholars who have given their lives to India, has been the redeeming feature of what might otherwise have been a soul-destroying business.

Nor is this the only way in which Christianity, not as ecclesiastical dogma, but as a way of life, has appealed to the mind of India. Hospitals, leper colonies, orphanages, undertaken in a spirit of service, staffed by men and women who live for the suffering and the needy, rather than for any tangible reward, have made a profound impression. Non-Christians in India are apt to say that their country needs more of the missionary spirit and of

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the “ Christian social conscience ”. And be it noted that these adjectives are used very deliberately by some. It is not enough to be socially awake and active. India wants the true Christian motive of selfless compassion to infuse the spirit of service.

Christian theology has not made any great impact on India. In matters of theology and metaphysics many Indians would claim that Hinduism is in no sense inferior to Christianity. But it is the Christian life at its best, illustrated for instance by a saint of the quality of Charles Freer Andrews, that reaches to the depth of India's mind and heart. And behind the lives of a few individual Christian men and women whom they have known and loved, there is the New Testament portrait of Jesus Christ, his teaching, his life and his death on the cross.

One feature of the New Testament that impresses many Indians is its pacifist teaching. Whereas many western Church leaders, and some Indian Christians who have learnt their Christianity from western theologians, do not so interpret the New Testament, the more detached Hindu reader is often struck by it at once. Although it is easy for those who cling to the need for armed defence to discover isolated passages which seem to justify fighting, the prevalence of such teaching as pervades the New Testament (“ resist not evil ”, “ love your enemies ”, “ do good to them that hate you ”, “ overcome evil with good ”) shines out in its full radiance to those whose minds and hearts are open. Here is something that can take the world further than doing one's appointed task with detachment. The true follower of Jesus must learn not only to refrain from hatred but to overcome hate with active love and goodwill. Here

we find ourselves back in the climate of the Buddha's teaching. Here is a teaching that may save the world from race suicide. No policy of retaliation is possible for the man who takes the teaching of the New Testament seriously.

Nor is it only the teaching of Jesus that strikes the Indian as pacifist in tone. His whole life is lived in the spirit of overcoming evil with good, and the climax of his death on the cross is the final seal. Although he was convinced that God could have sent "legions of angels" to protect him from arrest and crucifixion, he had the faith to believe that his death as a felon would prove a mightier weapon for the vindication of truth than all the conquering armies of the empires, or any miraculous intervention from on high. Truth must be its own vindication. Rulers and ecclesiastics, men who possess wealth and power, may scorn truth and trample it underfoot; but it finds a lodging in the hearts of the silent multitude; it lies hidden in the secret recesses of man's being; it works, as Jesus saw that it must work, like leaven in the loaf or like seed in the soil. One who could, in the agonies of a cruel death, pray "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do", must have been divine, said a Hindu. Such a teaching, which deposes military and economic and political power, and relies solely on the invincible strength of the enlightened conscience, appeals to the mind of India. In her interpretation of the gospel of Jesus, India is likely to pay regard especially to the essential quality of his life. Through the genius of India, Jesus may come to life again for the whole world.

There is another aspect of the impact of western Christianity on Asia that needs to be examined. Bertrand

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Russell has recently said that “ the West has stood in the imagination of the rest of the world, not primarily for Christianity, but for restless adventure, technical skill, ruthless military efficiency, and, during the nineteenth century, for certain ideals of liberty and the practice of constitutional government”.⁴ As a generalisation this seems true enough ; but for India it might well be modified. Perhaps it would be true to summarise the position by saying that the West has come to Africa and the East as a dynamic force into a static atmosphere ; in India especially this dynamism has been infused with a Christian flavour. For many in India the central figure towering above the western dynamo has been the Jesus who said ; “ I have come that they might have life and might have it more abundantly.”

Mankind all over the world has a strong tendency towards personalising his principles. Most men and women like to see truth in action. They crave for some leader whom they can follow — the lazy-minded with blind devotion, the healthy-minded with critical devotion : but all with devotion. Hindu metaphysical speculation has been obliged to personify God, the absolute, in the form of Vishnu or Rama or Krishna. Modern man, influenced by scientific thought and by the study of history as a science, prefers to find a figure with some claim to be historic. This is no doubt one reason for India's new devotion to the figure of the Buddha. If we are to build our religion round a human-divine incarnation, India half-consciously says, let it be the Indian Buddha rather than the Jew Jesus, reflected back to us through western eyes. But those who are not influenced even subconsciously to any extent by such secret

⁴ *Human Society in Ethics and Politics*, p. 189.

nationalism of thought are inclined to turn rather to the life-affirming Jesus than to the life-denying Buddha. Flat oppositions of this kind should not, indeed, be taken at their face value ; they are over-simplifications. It may well be that if the original teachings of Jesus and the Buddha could be set side by side it would be found that eighty per cent of their teaching would be identical : their compassion for the multitude, their insistence on service to man as being more pleasing to God (or a surer way of release from sorrow and pain) than sacrifice or ritual ; their preference for the humble and meek and poor over the mighty and strong and rich. Comparison in such a case, if intended to emphasise difference, is largely odious. It remains historically true that the impact of a dynamic Christian missionary activity, interpreting the teaching of a dynamic Jesus — which India as a whole has been discerning enough to distinguish from the outer shell of western domination — has proved one of the major forces in the rebirth of India. The spiritual leaders of young India do not call men to renounce desire in order to achieve *nirvana* ; rather they call them to join in building the kingdom of God upon earth. The response they receive is measured by the integrity and dynamic quality of those who lead India to the promised land.

In the succeeding chapters of this book, Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave are considered as the two men of this century who have been leading India into paths of wisdom and righteousness. So here it may be useful to see what they have said from time to time about Jesus.

Addressing a student body in Colombo, Gandhi said :

For many years I have regarded Jesus of Nazareth as one among the mighty teachers that the world has had, and I say this in all

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humility. I claim humility for this expression because this is exactly what I feel. Of course, Christians claim a higher place for Jesus of Nazareth than I, as a non-Christian and a Hindu, am able to feel. I purposely use the word "feel" instead of "give" because I consider that neither I nor anybody else can possibly arrogate to himself the claim of *giving* a place to a great man. . . . I say to the 75 per cent Hindus receiving instruction in this college that your lives also will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teaching of Jesus. I have come to the conclusion in my own experience that those who, no matter to what faith they belong, reverently study the teaching of other faiths, broaden instead of narrowing their hearts. . . . The message of Jesus is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, unadulterated and taken as a whole. . . . If, then, I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, "Oh yes, I am a Christian". But I know that at the present moment if I said such a thing I would lay myself open to the gravest misinterpretation.

But negatively I can tell you that to my mind much of that which passes for Christianity is a negation of the Sermon on the Mount. Please mark my words carefully. I am not at the present moment speaking especially of Christian conduct : I am speaking of Christian *belief*, of Christianity as it is understood in the West. I am painfully aware of the fact that conduct everywhere falls far short of belief. Therefore I do not say this by way of criticism. . . .

There is one thing which came forcibly to me in my early studies of the Bible. It seized me immediately when I read one passage. The text was this : "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you." I tell you that if you will understand, appreciate, and act up to the spirit of this passage, then you will not even need to know what place Jesus, or any other teacher, occupies in your heart or my heart.⁵

In the *Modern Review* (Calcutta) in 1941, Gandhi wrote :

What does Jesus mean to me ? To me, He was one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had. To His believers, He was God's

⁵ *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* by C. F. Andrews, Allen and Unwin, pp. 92-4.

only begotten Son. Could the fact that I do or do not accept this belief make Jesus have any more or less influence in my life? Is all the grandeur of His teaching and of His doctrine to be forbidden to me? I cannot believe so. . . . Because the life of Jesus has the significance and the transcendency to which I have alluded, I believe that He belongs not solely to Christianity, but to the entire world, to all races and people—it matters little under what flag, name or doctrine they may work, profess a faith or worship a god inherited from their ancestors.

Again :

I have not been able to see any difference between the Sermon on the Mount and the Bhagavad Gita. What the Sermon describes in a graphic manner, the Bhagavad Gita reduces to a scientific formula. . . . Today supposing I was deprived of the Gita and forgot all its contents but had a copy of the Sermon, I should derive the same joy from it as I do from the Gita.⁶

Vinoba Bhave probably refers to the historic Jesus and quotes his words more often than Gandhi did. On Christmas Day, 1957, at the time of the morning worship, as he travelled from village to village, Vinoba's party sang Christmas carols instead of the usual traditional Hindu chants, and then he spoke as follows :

Christmas is being celebrated all over the world today. Very little is known of the early life of Jesus Christ. His ministry lasted just for two or three years. He moved in an area which was not wider than three or four districts in our country. The period of his ministry and the extent of territory in which he moved were so limited and yet his name and words spread all over the world. Such men remind us that there is something in man which is immortal. Light travels at a high speed. The mind of man has still more speed. . . . But there is something beyond the mind. The person who has it, call it the spirit or the *atman*, has a power which knows

⁶ *Young India*, December 12, 1927.

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no limit. . . . An atomic explosion inevitably affects the atmosphere all over the world. Likewise the experience of a person has an effect on the world. . . . Faith is a more appropriate name than religion. The spirit or *atman* is immeasurable and imponderable. . . .

The story of Jesus has always had a fascination for me. While meditating on his life I realised the infinite compassion and tenderness of his heart. He had integrated and transformed himself through the power of compassion. . . . In the language of modern psychology he had real feminine traits in his character. The atmic principle knows no difference of the masculine and the feminine traits. But in the development of man both are important. When the Bible says "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" it means that a wise man can be complete only when he has united in himself the masculine and femine traits. . . .

How exhilarating is the thought of the man who carried his cross and who said : "Love thy neighbour as thyself ; love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and persecute you ". Let the spirit of Christ abide with us.

One day, a number of Vinoba's followers, who had been walking with him and learning from him, were gathered together before leaving him to carry on the work of obtaining land for the landless through the length and breadth of India. They had come to receive his benediction and his final directions. When they had all gathered he asked someone to produce a copy of the New Testament. He opened it at the place where Jesus is recorded as sending out seventy disciples. He read the directions Jesus gave to his disciples, closed the book, and said : "I have nothing to add." The session was ended, and the workers had been given their directions.

Hallam Tennyson records that, in conversation, Vinoba criticised the attitude of Jesus to the Pharisees. So close does he feel himself to the mind of Jesus that he even criticises him. Such is the freedom of the true disciple.

CHAPTER III

GANDHI

WE NOW come face to face with Gandhi. Not that Gandhi was the first great Indian to show a positive reaction to the impact of the West. He had several predecessors, to whom reference will be made later. But India today, or at least the India of this essay, the India that is neither a return to the Vedas nor a pale reflection of the West, is essentially the creation of Gandhi.

Gandhi called himself a Hindu to the day of his death. He never changed his religious loyalty. When he was in South Africa, as a young man, he was intimate with evangelically-minded Christians, who for a time influenced him so much that he seriously considered "conversion". His comradeship with these Christians was very close; once, in the course of some light-hearted reminiscing, he told me of an occasion when, out of loyalty to one of his evangelical Christian friends, he attended a "witness" meeting where he composed the total audience. It was, of course, typical of him to help a man who was fighting a lonely battle, with no powerful organisation to back him. But, on full consideration, the young Gandhi decided that there was no reason to cut himself away from his Hindu roots. If Christianity had something to teach Hinduism, then he, as a Hindu, must

try to purify Hinduism — for example, by fighting the curse of untouchability. He has explained, in his autobiography, the reasons that led him to reject the orthodox Christianity which his evangelical friends pressed upon him. That did not mean, however, that he turned his back on the New Testament. Gandhi's favourite Christian hymn, to the day of his death, was the hymn of Isaac Watts beginning with the words, "When I survey the wondrous cross, where the young Prince of Glory died, my dearest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride". The hymn even uses the words, "Christ my God", and insists that "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my strength, my life, my all". It was not in Gandhi's nature to use words, even in hymns or chants, that his mind did not consent to. So the question whether Gandhi, the Mahatma, the Great Soul, was a Christian as well as a Hindu will be answered differently according to the definition one may make of what it constitutes to be a Christian. A theologically trained American Christian told me, after visiting Gandhi, that he thought him "the truest Christian he had ever met". Others, not only from America, thought the same.

Is this an attempt to prove that Gandhi was at heart a Christian all the time rather than a Hindu? — or, in modern jargon, a kind of crypto-Christian? Not in the least. He himself openly claimed in later life that he was not only a Hindu, but also a Muslim, a Christian, a Sikh, a Buddhist, a Parsi, a Jew. When he said these things he was apt to annoy Muslims and Christians, many of whom consider it impossible to belong to more than one of the great faiths. Gandhi was no orthodox Christian; but neither was he an orthodox Hindu. He combined, in his own person, much of the richness of the Hindu

tradition with some of the best in the Christian tradition. These two vital streams met in him. He himself said that, although the New Testament had affected him profoundly, yet in the times of his greatest need it was commonly a verse from the Gita that brought him the succour that he needed.

Gandhi is the central figure in the new Indian culture ; and one essential thing about him is that, while remaining a Hindu all his life, he welcomed and tried to make his own the best in every religious tradition. A century before Gandhi, Ram Mohan Roy, the first inspirer of Indian social reform, gave himself to the study of Persian and of the Koran in his early manhood. It might fairly be argued that Ram Mohan Roy did more to Islamise the Hinduism of Bengal in the early nineteenth century than to Christianise it. At any rate, as far as he could, he did both. But when we come to Gandhi a still more potent Muslim influence suggests itself. Gandhi, in the last phase of his life, began to use a word *sarvodaya* to express his social philosophy. This word, as far as I know, was coined by him to translate the idea conveyed in the title of John Ruskin's essay, "Unto this Last". At least it means the same thing : the good of all, as opposed to ideas of the greatest good of the greatest number : not the majority, says Gandhi ; not even a ninety-nine per cent majority, but *all* must be the concern of the true welfare State. Where did Gandhi get this idea ? He may have found it in many places—Ruskin, Rousseau, the New Testament, the Gita, and so on ; but surely in part, perhaps even principally, it stems from the Islamic conception of human brotherhood, in which every man is equal in the sight of God. This conception, so alien to the Hindu caste structure, can hardly have come to

India from western Christianity, though it is easy enough to find it in the Gospels. Politically, India no doubt has derived the idea of equality largely from the influence of the French and American Revolutions ; but in the more fundamental human and religious sense, it has come through Gandhi, and it would seem that he derived it primarily from Islam.

Here are Gandhi's own words about Islam : " Islam's distinctive contribution to India's national culture ", he wrote in *Young India* in 1929, " is its unadulterated belief in the oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of the brotherhood of man for those who are nominally within its fold. I call these two distinctive contributions. For in Hinduism the spirit of brotherhood has become too much philosophised. Similarly, though philosophical Hinduism has no other god but God, it cannot be denied that practical Hinduism is not so emphatically uncompromising as Islam."

In 1927 he also wrote : " I do regard Islam as a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are. No doubt there are differences of degree, but the object (goal ?) of these religions is peace."

Gandhi rejected the claim of any ancient scripture to unquestioning acceptance, whether Hindu Shastras, Muslim Koran or Christian or Jewish Bible.

" I shall not make a fetish of religion and I cannot justify any evil in its sacred name. I have no desire to carry one single soul with me, if I cannot convince him by an appeal to reason. I shall even go to the length of rejecting the divinity of the most ancient Shastras, if they do not appeal to my reason." When a Muslim divine in India wrote to Gandhi to protest that he had dared to differ from the Holy Koran, he replied " . . .

even the teachings themselves of the Koran cannot be exempt from criticism. Every true scripture only gains by criticism. After all, we have no other guide but our reason to tell us what may be regarded as revealed and what may not." At another time he, Gandhi the Hindu, asserted that the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta of the Parsis are "as much divinely inspired as the (Hindu) Vedas".¹

It is useful also to see what Gandhi had to say about his own religious faith, in relation to the great world religions :

"If I could call myself, say, a Christian, or a Mussalman, with my own interpretation of the Bible or the Koran, I should not hesitate to call myself either. For then Hindu, Christian and Mussalman would be synonymous terms. I do believe that in the other world there are neither Hindus nor Christians nor Mussalmans. They all are judged according to their actions irrespective of their professions. During our earthly existence there will always be these labels. I therefore prefer to retain the label of my forefathers so long as it does not cramp my growth and does not debar me from assimilating all that is good anywhere else". In these sentences, one seems to detect his assimilating a very Christian or at least Semitic view of the after-life, contrasted with this life, and including a day of judgement, which he seems to depict in a way that has been influenced by the parable from the Gospels of the sheep and the goats.

More simply, perhaps, the two following quotations give his mature judgment on the relationship of world faiths : " My Hindu instinct tells me that all religions are

¹ See " Presidential address to the Indian Philosophical Congress " by A. R. Wadia, Dacca, 1930. Published at the Bangalore Press.

more or less true. All proceed from the same God, but all are imperfect because they have come down to us through imperfect human instrumentality."

"Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals." And the goal of their search he described indifferently as God or truth. For to him, God was not a personal being, even though he seemed to have a very close personal relationship with his "inner voice"; but God was truth. And, what was more, truth, he declared, is God — so that every man who is selflessly pursuing truth, such as the scientist in his laboratory, and many men who call themselves agnostics or atheists, are by this definition seekers after God — and that was all that he himself claimed to be.

But what did he mean by truth? He was asked this question during a short visit to Switzerland in December 1931, and his answer was to this effect:

"A difficult question, but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you". But, he adds, of course different people think their inner voice tells them different things. How then are you to decide what inner voice to trust? And here we meet the Indian tradition in him. It depends, he says, on a rigid inner discipline, which he proceeds to define in some detail. You must learn to live by the five vows or disciplines, namely the vow of truth, the vow of purity or disinterestedness, the vow of non-violence in thought, word and deed, the vow of poverty and the vow of non-possession. Even this, he adds, is not enough. And he concludes: "Truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on

the bosom of the ocean of truth you must reduce yourself to a zero."

Let it never be thought that for Gandhi religion was chiefly a matter of "religions" or of speculation on the nature of the absolute, however profound and truly philosophical. Reginald Reynolds has recently written that Gandhi "emphasised work as worship, community as religion, right action as true idealism". The religious man, in Gandhi's estimation, was not the man who either preached stirring sermons or listened to them, or who faithfully carried out so-called religious practices. Rather, he was the man who lost himself in devotion to the service of humanity.

"A life of service", he wrote, "must be a life of humility. He who would sacrifice his life for others, has hardly time to reserve for himself a place in the sun. . . . Self-surrender is the price for the only real freedom that is worth having. And when a man thus loses himself, he immediately finds himself in the service of all that lives. It becomes his life and his recreation. He is a new man, never weary of spending himself in the service of God's creation."

Gandhi's insistence on the central virtue of humility is well illustrated by some characteristics of his own life, public as well as private. He made a practice, whenever anything went wrong or turned out badly, to seek first of all in himself to see where he had gone wrong. "Turn the searchlight inwards", he used to say; "by the time you have done that adequately, you will have no need to turn the searchlight on your colleagues". Again and again he would undergo some penance for an act of some young colleague. One of my first Indian friends, who had lived in Gandhi's Sabarmati *ashram*, told me

how he once used a contemptuous expression about some British officer. It happened that the officer was called Pratt ; my young friend could not resist playing with his name, and saying that he was a mere “pret”, the Hindi name for an objectionable bird of prey. Gandhi did not like such a term of derision of an opponent, and remarked that he had evidently failed to teach the young man the *ashram* rules adequately ; thus he made himself responsible for the breach of etiquette. He fasted all the next day, as penance for his failure as a teacher. He did not call on the young man to fast.

In matters of high politics, too, he was ever ready to take the blame when things went wrong. When his first non-cooperation movement broke out into violence, he called it a “Himalayan blunder”. He should have recognised, he said, that the people were not sufficiently disciplined for true non-violent action. He called off the whole movement, and undertook a fast as penance. Such action was indeed typical of him, and it must have done much to bind men to him in bonds of closest loyalty.

The rarity of such an attitude hardly needs stressing. All men like to find a culprit when things go wrong. Some other fellow has acted foolishly, or has betrayed the cause ; it is not easy to believe that the chief culprit is here within oneself. Modern psychology is helping us to see that the faults of children, for which their parents blame them, are often the reflection of faults in the parents themselves. They may set impossibly high standards for their children, which they do not themselves attain. Gandhi certainly set very high standards for those who accepted the discipline of his *ashram* ; but he never demanded of his followers standards that he did not enforce on himself. Sometimes the things he

demanding of the younger members seemed cruelly harsh ; they accepted them, because they knew that he had himself followed and was still using the same hard path he was asking them to tread.

At the time of the Round-Table Conference in London, in 1931, a house was taken in Knightsbridge for Gandhi and his staff. He himself was the guest of Muriel Lester in Kingsley Hall, Bow, in East London and he was driven to and from Knightsbridge each morning and evening. But as his secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, and his son Devadas lived and fed at Knightsbridge, some housekeeping was necessary there. Dr. and Mrs. S. K. Datta undertook to find the domestic staff to prepare the meals. I was spending a day or two each week in London. A few days after the cook had been engaged Dr. S. K. Datta (distinguished Indian Christian and scholar, himself a member of the Conference) came to me and asked me to try to persuade Mahadev Desai and his colleagues to be rather more regular and punctual for meals. Otherwise the cook would not stay. I did what I could, but Mahadev would only say, smilingly, " Well, you know how it is ; we have to wait on Gandhiji (more likely he said " Bapu "), and you know we cannot always be sure of being back at an exact hour." I reported to Dr. Datta and left for my home in Birmingham. Next week I asked how the domestic staff was doing. Had the cook left ? " No ", said the usually pessimistic Dr. Datta ; " Mr. Gandhi has had a talk with her, and she is still here, but I do not think she will stay long." In fact, she stayed for the remaining two months, and became a cheerful, lively member of the household, offering us mid-morning drinks and other extras, and never complaining. What Gandhi had said to her is not known. What

was clear was this : she had seen that he, the great and terrible Indian fire-brand and revolutionary, the traitor to King George and all the rest, treated her with true respect, regarded her as just as important a member of the household as any other, whether Mahadev Desai or Charlie Andrews ; and that he was as considerate of her and her welfare as of all the rest, and was never sparing himself of work, morning, noon and night. In the light of what Gandhi said to other people he met wherever he lived it is probable that he asked her about her own family, and continued to show an interest in her and in them, week by week.

And she was not the only one. There was the girl who answered the door bell. What her hours were supposed to be, I never knew. Fortunately for her and for all of us, she had no union to protect her from "exploitation". The door bell began to ring about seven each morning, and she was never idle till eleven or so at night. She always seemed to be on the spot, always cheerful ; apparently she had never enjoyed herself so much. The secret ? She, too, was a full member of Gandhi's family, for those weeks, and it was good fun working for him and with him. I am sure she and he had a little laugh together on the doorstep most mornings and evenings as he passed in and out.

Then there was the Scotland Yard detective whose job it was to protect Gandhi. He took such surprising stories home to his wife that she came and sat in the vestibule one afternoon, not with any thought of interrupting Gandhi or speaking to him, but just to see for herself — not only to see him, but to see what really did go on in this surprising household. Whether Gandhi spoke to her that day I do not remember ; but something

more exciting was in store for her. Before he left London, tired out as he was, Gandhi went to take tea with her and her husband. Next day, the detective commented: "Mr. Gandhi must be the hardest-worked public man I have ever had to look after, unless perhaps Mr. Lloyd George when he was Prime Minister during the war ; but he is the first one who has ever found time to visit me in my home."

Do all these private details matter, even with a great man like Gandhi ? With him they matter supremely. For his life was all of one piece. That is why he was truly revolutionary. What is the use, his life asked perpetually, of talking about the needs of the poor and the exploited when you do not set an example of caring for them today ? "Unto this Last" means, not "unto this last" at the millennium ; but "unto this last" today, and first and foremost in my own daily life. Ends and Means in fact ; and we cannot begin to examine Gandhi's public life with any hope of comprehension, unless we first see what he had to say about the relation of ends and means. What did he say ?

The essence of his conviction was this : every man can control what he does today ; no man can control what may happen a year or a century hence. Therefore, let each man do the best he knows today, leaving the outcome to God. This does not mean, of course, that men should have no long distance goals. By all means let us agree to strive together for the independence of our nation ; for the peace of the world ; for such improvement in the world's economy and such equitable distribution of the world's goods that every man, woman and child may have a tolerable amount of the necessities of life. But how do you begin ? The best way to begin

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working for the freedom of your country is to act as if it were free today ; in other words, begin to build up all the useful mutual services that will give true dignity to the country when it does achieve its freedom ; ignore the alien government as far as possible, and build alternative organs of common action. To build world peace, begin by acting peacefully towards your neighbour today ; show understanding of his point of view ; try to meet his demands, even if they do not seem reasonable ; approach him, whether he is your neighbour, or a remote foreigner living across an armed and dangerous frontier, as if his aspirations were similar to your own ; act peaceably towards him, be patient with him, “ go the second mile ” with him. Wars, says Gandhi (and he is certainly not the first wise man to say it) do not bring peace ; they bring further wars ; nor do threats and preparations for war bring peace ; therefore let us try the peaceful approach to peace. And again with poverty ; you will not destroy poverty by destroying the rich ; better to set a good example by making friends of the poor, by sharing what you can from your own surplus, by trying never to use for your own selfish enjoyment what others need for the bare necessities. Such living may help to commend peace and social justice to others. You cannot tell what the outcome may be, but such action may in fact bring you something better than you had ever dreamed of. And even if the immediate outcome is seeming disaster for the cause you have at heart, you can meet it with joy and courage, rather than rushing at your goal by a short cut, only to find that you have reached no true freedom, no true peace, to true socialism at all.

Here is another important attribute of the truly religious man as Gandhi saw him. “ Service is impossible

without bread labour. . . . It is only when a man or woman has done bodily labour for the sake of service that he or she has the right to live." Strong language, indeed. In the West, some of us might be tempted to interpret this so as to allow those who spend an hour or two in the week cultivating their gardens to have the "right to live". I am not sure that Gandhi would have accepted that. Perhaps we should have just passed, in the very lowest class, if we zealously grew vegetables; a flower garden would hardly suffice. But I may be doing him an injustice here. He might have said that the very act of turning the soil, thereby making it more productive, was the true symbol of bodily labour. In the act of digging with a spade, one is brought into a certain mystic union with Mother Earth, and with all the dumb, semi-starved millions who produce man's essential basic food. In any case, here again, there can be little doubt that women would pass his test more readily or in larger numbers than men; for women, even sophisticated western women, nearly all spend a good part of each day cooking in their kitchens or knitting for their children and nephews and nieces and grandchildren. All such work will earn them the right to eat in the Gandhian community.

However we interpret this hard Gandhian saying, it is clear that we are again in the realm of ends and means. To Gandhi, the only true socialist was the man who shared his whole surplus, and identified himself in bodily labour, with the poor and the needy. Armchair socialism, whether of the Karl Marxian brand, or the Webb-Fabian brand or the Bernard Shavian brand, made no great appeal to him. The test of man's socialist sincerity was to be found in his daily life. If the purpose of

socialism is to build a community bound together as a brotherhood, then the first step that a socialist must take is to live as nearly as possible in brotherly relations with his needy neighbours.

Gandhi himself, in the course of his life, learnt to be a farmer, a spinner of cloth, a weaver, a nurse, and I believe a carpenter and a builder and a plumber. If there was a practical job to be attended to in Gandhi's *ashram*, whether in plumbing or nursing or organising transport, Gandhi himself was the most likely man to have a prompt and efficient solution to propose ; and whilst others were discussing, he would begin to carry it out. My first active contact with him came when I was allowed to assist him and two or three of the *ashram* women in cutting up the vegetables for dinner. Unfortunately the first day of my apprenticeship was his silent day — one day in every week he spoke no word to anyone — however, by sign-language he managed to teach me what needed to be done.

His demand that every member of the Indian National Congress should spin cotton yarn was due in part to his conviction that, until simple industrial processes could be introduced into every village, the poverty stricken villagers, many of them living in enforced partial idleness through some months of the year, could ease their lot by making their own clothes instead of buying them from textile mills. But hand spinning also had an immense symbolic value. In a land like India, where the clerical and “ white-collar ” castes have tended to despise manual labour, a daily half-hour of manual labour on the simplest of spinning wheels would be a daily reminder to the educated leaders that their chief concern must be for the impoverished and dumb millions. Identification with the

poor through manual labour would foster national unity and break down caste and other barriers.

Apart from his effort to free India from British rule, Gandhi is known throughout the world as a man who stood for non-violence in every department of life, but especially in international relations. In part he inherited the principle of non-violence from his Indian ancestors, and notably from the influence of the Jains, a large sect of western India who refuse to kill any creature. But also he was influenced directly by the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and by the teaching of Tolstoy. He began experimenting with non-violent mass resistance to injustice as the leader of a small, poor, divided minority of Indians in South Africa. Their capacity for discipline and suffering proved so remarkable that he became more and more convinced that non-violent action could be substituted for violence in every sphere of human affairs. Nothing in his later experiences of non-violent civil disobedience campaigns in India shook his conviction. Indeed, year by year his insistence that "truth and non-violence" provide a complete armoury for every political campaign grew and grew. At the very end of his life, when he saw the carnage and inter-communal strife that broke loose after India, contrary to his advice, had accepted partition, he confessed that he had been blind ; but that meant simply that he had believed that the people of India had learnt to believe in non-violence as a principle of strength and courage ; he now saw that they had only adopted it as a convenient expedient of weakness in their struggle against the British.

Yet, if Gandhi could have lived for another five years, he would surely have had his consolation. For he would

have seen the astonishing spectacle of a free India, led by men who had spent years in British jails, living in friendly cooperation with England whose Prime Minister was the man who opposed each step taken towards freedom, and who refused to meet Gandhi in London in 1931. Gandhi's insistence that a campaign of true non-violence could include no hatred or bitterness towards the foe had been extraordinarily well learnt by most of his close colleagues in the fight.

What did Gandhi mean by this term "non-violence"? Why had he such faith in its potency? He insisted that it was not the same as pacifism; for pacifism, he said, was essentially negative, whereas non-violence is a positive force. There is, perhaps, room for confusion here. The word "pacifism" literally means peace-making; and if that is not a positive virtue, then no virtue is positive; a would-be peacemaker has set himself upon one of the most arduous, unrewarding tasks that it is possible to conceive. However, that was not, presumably, the kind of pacifism that Gandhi was rejecting as negative. How did "non-violence" come to mean something positive? It will be recalled that, when Gandhi first organised passive resistance to discriminatory legislation in South Africa, he disliked the expression "passive resistance", as he thought there was an implication in it of weakness. It might be taken to mean: "We would fight with guns, if only we had them." He wanted to show that the non-violent campaigns he was helping to lead were non-violent by choice, not by necessity. Finally, the expression *satyagraha* was evolved, meaning the power of truth, or even, perhaps, the power of the human spirit. "On your side", says the *satyagrahi*, the devotee of non-violence, "you may have all the mighty forces of the modern

state, arms, money, a controlled press, and all the rest. On my side I have nothing but my conviction of right and truth, the unquenchable spirit of man, who is prepared to die for his conviction rather than submit to your brute force. And under Gandhi's leadership, I have my comrades in armlessness. Here we stand ; and here if need be we fall." That is the strength of *satyagraha*, the strength of the human spirit, nothing more and nothing less.

But let us see how Gandhi himself explained his "soul-force" idea. He was once asked : "Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what you call soul-force or truth-force?" Some might say : Look at the success of the Christian martyrs in the Roman Empire. Gandhi's answer, however, is quite different, and very characteristic.

"It is necessary to know what 'history' means", says Gandhi. "The Gujarati equivalent means : 'It so happened'. If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. You cannot expect silver ore in a tin-mine. History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation that has no history, that is, no wars, is happy. How kings played, how they became enemies of one another, how they murdered one another, is found accurately recorded in history (books), and if this were all that had happened in the world, it would have ended long ago. . . . The fact that there are so many people alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. . . . Two brothers quarrel ; one of

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them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him ; the two again begin to live in peace ; nobody takes notice of this. But if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or for some other reason, take up arms and go to war or go to law — which is another form of the exhibition of brute force — their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbours and would probably go down in history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations. History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.”

Gandhi was very insistent that the way of non-violence is the way of the greater courage. “ What do you think ? Where is courage required — in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces ? Who is the true warrior — he who keeps death as his bosom friend, or he who controls the death of others ? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a *satyagrahi*. . . . Control over the mind alone is necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest and his very glance withers the enemy.”

How, he was asked, can a man become a true *satyagrahi*? Gandhi’s reply was : “ Observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth and cultivate fearlessness.”

One important aspect of Gandhi’s campaigns of non-violence was the place they opened up for women. So long as violence rules human affairs, humanity tends to be ruled by men, for men seem more inclined than women to indulge in mass violence. But in a non-violent fight,

where the courage needed is the kind that will cheerfully endure suffering without trying to inflict it, women are likely to be the better soldiers.

It is said that the Buddha gave women only a secondary role in the ranks of his disciples. If so, there is nothing remarkable in that. Indeed, before the twentieth century, it may be doubted whether there is any great historic figure apart from Jesus Christ who obviously perceived and recognised openly the vital part that women can play, not only in the home and in the training of children, but in the social and religious life of man. If this twentieth century is to be in history the first century of the true partnership in all realms of life of the two sexes, then Gandhi will have played a notable role in this final emancipation of woman. One is almost inclined to say that he brought women straight out of purdah to man (or should it be to “woman”?) the barricades. But what novel barricades! It was startling, when one landed in Bombay in 1930, during the then civil disobedience, to go round the City watching women, some of whom had till that day never ventured outside their households even veiled, now sitting openly on stools outside liquor shops or foreign cloth shops, quietly, composedly plying their little hand-spinning-wheels, as if they had been in public life all their lives. Yet some of them knew the City so little that they had no idea how to find their way home at the end of the day. Either they must wait for some man member of the family to fetch them, or—does it sound incredible?—they would rely on the goodwill of the shopkeeper whose trade they were silently picketing. Such was the potency of Gandhi’s appeal to the hearts of Indian women that scores responded to his call. When the women led processions

through the streets, as they were eager to do, the unfortunate police angrily protested that the men ought not to allow such things to happen, as it made the task of the police quite intolerable.

There can be no doubt that Gandhi had achieved a position in his own personality that gave him a very special appeal to women, no less than to men. One of his granddaughters, who spent the last months of her life ministering to his needs, after her own mother had died, has told her story under the title : " Gandhi my Mother". I heard Sarojini Naidu, surely one of the most masculine of women, declare that she talked things over with Gandhi which she would never think of discussing with any other man. His life of self-discipline and self-development, and, as he aptly called it, self-abandon, had enabled him to weld together in his own person the masculine and feminine qualities into a single whole, free from tension.

Can it be wondered that a campaign of liberation conducted by such a man, in such a manner, released new, untapped forces in the spirit of man (and woman), and that those forces are still mightily at work setting the silent masses of India free from many age-old fears ?

Homer Jack has provided an excellent summary of Gandhi's convictions on *satyagraha*. It is " meant for the common people, not merely for saints. It is war without violence. It is based on love, not on hate : on loving one's opponents and suffering to convert them. It differentiates between the sin and the sinner, between the evil and the evil-doer. It is the weapon of the brave, not of the weak. It demands discipline and may entail self-sacrifice, suffering, fasting, imprisonment and death, yet it has the supreme virtue of providing means consonant with the highest ends."

But it is not clear to all the world that the principle of non-violence as held by Gandhi is relevant to the international conflicts of the twentieth century. Was not the struggle of India with Britain, it is urged, a very special case? Did not Britain constantly assert her own desire to hand over self-government to the people of India as soon as they were fit for it? Had not British policy in relation to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, even in the end towards Ireland, indicated that they were always willing to surrender control? Were not self-government and parliamentary control in India increasing at every "reform"? Did not their care for the life of Gandhi himself indicate that, in spite of occasional acts of terror, the British would not proceed to extremes in the use of power, even against those who openly preached and practised disobedience to the established government?

It is possible to argue that the relationship between India and Britain was a special case. But every situation is a special case in one sense or other. Gandhi would not have abandoned his principles if he had been threatened with a firing squad; nor yet if he had seen most of his colleagues executed before his eyes. He himself frequently said that he believed many Indians would be called on to die before India could be free of the British — to die but not to kill. He had counted the cost. And if in fact the cost in human life was much less than he had thought likely, this does not mean that his principle is inapplicable in areas where the cost would be much greater.

Although this is not primarily a study of politics, Gandhi's part in the liberation of India from British rule is so important that it seems appropriate to draw attention here to the real significance of what happened. Some

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Britishers are inclined to argue that Gandhi, far from helping forward the process of self-government, actually retarded it. The British Government, it is pointed out, had always declared that self-government was the end at which they aimed. India was being prepared for this by successive stages ; first municipal self-government, then provincial self-government, and finally the transfer of power at the centre was bound to follow. If only Indians would work the new representative institutions with energy and goodwill, the transfer would come speedily.

During the Round Table Conference on the future of Indian government, held in London in the autumn of 1931, Gandhi spent a weekend in the Master's Lodge, at Balliol College, Oxford, meeting informally several leading British public men, official and unofficial, in an endeavour to break the deadlock between the British Government and the Indian National Congress. Professor Coupland opened the session by expounding the theory that, in the development of the British Commonwealth of free nations, freedom had broadened down from precedent to precedent in an orderly manner, stage by stage, until in turn Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland had all achieved full freedom ; and that the more orderly and constitutional the movement in each domain had been, the more rapid had been the development. In a sentence, the British people responded to constitutional appeals, especially when they were backed by efficient discharge of local self-government, whereas they only had their backs put up, and were liable to take a stiff and uncompromising line of resistance, if any kind of pressure through direct action were attempted.

Gandhi listened respectfully, but he proceeded to assure Professor Coupland that he considered him wrong both in history and psychology. He pointed out that the Canadian Rebellion of 1840 was the shock that led the British people to recognise the need for self-government in Canada. The history of both Ireland and South Africa demonstrated the same thesis. In both cases, after much talk of self-government, it only finally arrived after bloody conflict, when the British people had seen that it could no longer be denied. Even in New Zealand, there had been a Maori Rebellion. Australia alone had come to full self-government in the manner the Professor had suggested was typical. Gandhi went on to say that he did not suggest that the British people meanly surrendered to armed force. On the contrary, they might begin by suppressing the rebellion. But they learnt to respect a nation, when they saw that it was so determined to have its freedom that it was willing to fight and die in the attempt to achieve it. He was convinced that the same would prove true in the case of India. The only way India could achieve real freedom was not by having it handed to them from Britain bit by bit, but by fighting for it, and earning the respect of the British in the process. Only, they meant their fight, unlike the Canadian, Irish and South African fightings, to be non-violent, so that the Indians would suffer most, and the English as little as possible.

The late H. N. Brailsford once told an impatient Indian nationalist audience, in my hearing, that every Indian campaign of civil disobedience had led to the conversion of a larger proportion of the British people to the conviction that India must be free. He said this in 1946, only a few weeks before the Cabinet Mission

arrived in India to work out a plan for the final withdrawal of the British authority. He assured his audience that the recent elections in Britain had shown that the majority in England was now converted ; and that the new government in England was determined to withdraw. His audience was completely sceptical. But in less than eighteen months from the date when he spoke, the withdrawal had been completed. What had happened ? To put it briefly (and I now quote the comment made by a Chinese visitor to India two or three years later) the new moral level to which Gandhi had brought international politics had met with a response at an equal moral level from the British Labour Government, primarily through the clear conviction of Mr. Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps and Lord Pethick-Lawrence that this was the right thing to do ; and the British left India with the maximum of Indian goodwill, which has endured ever since. Compare this with what has happened in Indonesia, in French North Africa, and in some other colonial areas, and it is easy to see what the world owes to men of the calibre of Gandhi on the one hand and Cripps on the other. Moreover, the contrast between India, in which Gandhi had developed a well organised fighting force, essentially non-violent, and therefore highly disciplined, and such countries as Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, none of which had developed inner strength before the grant of self-government, is such that one must surely accept the validity of Gandhi's Oxford thesis. Freedom, if it is to be rightly used, must be won, not merely granted ; and if it can be won without bloodshed, it is far more likely to lead to a strong popular government.

Gandhi made it clear that if, on the achievement of freedom, he was called to take charge of the

Government of India, he would disarm completely, and would rely on organised non-violent resistance to any attempt that might be made to re-conquer India, whether by the British, the Pakistanis, the Russians, the Chinese or anyone else. He knew that India was not yet ready to follow him in this policy, so he did not offer himself to become head of the new government. He was content to leave this task to his intimate friends and colleagues, who differed from him at this fundamental point, but who knew that he would give them the day to day advice and help that they sorely needed to cope with their huge task — as in fact he did. This capacity to accept the fact of different views on some fundamental matters, yet still to be loyal to old friendships and to help people to do the very best they can to fulfil their own principles, is such a rare thing in a human being that even some of his own close associates seem to think that after independence came, owing to the immediate dangers threatening from Pakistan, Gandhi changed his opinion about the practicability of the way of non-violence as an adequate protection for a modern sovereign State. But he did not do so. This is quite clear from his own writings ; and I discussed the matter with him more than once during those last few months of his life, especially in relation to the fighting in Kashmir. Here, his published statements caused some dismay in pacifist circles in the West, as he was very emphatic in stating that India was bound to resist the armed invasion of Kashmir in the autumn of 1947. He was, indeed, warning Pakistan not to assume that he, Gandhi, would use his influence with the Government of India to stop sending troops to Kashmir. But even while he was saying that of course India was bound to send

troops to resist the invasion he was also saying that it would have been far better if every Kashmiri had been able bravely to stand up in heroic non-violent resistance to the invader. He knew that there was a better way to resist an invader ; but he also knew that the India and the Kashmir of that moment, even under the leadership of his close friends and colleagues, were not ready to try it — they had not the courage or the discipline needed to try such a way. Whenever Gandhi seemed to approve armed resistance it was with the qualification, again and again clearly expressed : “ There is a better way that I believe in and which India and the world must find : the way of refusing to meet power with power, arms with arms, but equally a way that refuses at any point to bow the knee to insolent might.”

In the last months of his life Gandhi seems to have been impressed by a rather different argument. It seems that some English bishop (who has not been identified) wrote to him questioning whether the immense courage that is undoubtedly needed to stand defenceless against armed aggression can ever be learnt by a whole nation : the best they can be expected to do is to show the courage of armed soldiery, to fight and if need be to die in war. In the light of his own experience Gandhi was impressed with the force of this contention. Again and again he had tried to lead India in a non-violent rebellion ; again and again violent incidents had occurred. Thousands had learnt the discipline of the true *satyagrahi* ; but millions had failed to learn it. As far as I know, Gandhi did not find time in those last hectic months to write at length a considered comment on this. What follows is mine not his ; but in the light of the talks I had with him, and of all that he did write on this great

and vital theme, I do not think it can be very far from what he would have said.

Some small countries, it is true, have resolved to disarm largely or completely in an armed world — Denmark, Luxembourg, Iceland — realising that armed defence against their big neighbours would be futile, and that disarmament might prove a better defence. In case of invasion, they have attempted some amount of non-violent non-cooperation, whose full story has yet to be adequately studied and made known to the world. Such action is not to be despised, but it does not yet indicate the readiness of a great nation to renounce armed defence from strength rather than from weakness. It is not, in fact, a genuine example of the conversion of a whole people to non-violence or pacifism. Is such a conversion conceivable?

The martyrdom of early Christians, who in their scores were willing to be thrown into the arena and torn to pieces by wild beasts, demands a courage and a devotion that a whole nation is never likely to achieve. Patriotism, it would seem, never calls forth quite such an exalted type of heroism as religious conviction. Can humanity's need to abolish war ever claim the same religious zeal and utter selflessness that has permitted men in large numbers to court martyrdom for their religious faith? It seems doubtful.

Yet it is strange that, in the non-communist world, men speak as if failure to resist armed aggression from the Communist powers would condemn the western countries to perpetual slavery. That it would condemn the nations so overrun to vast misery and to a temporary loss of liberty is not to be denied. But there is one liberty, the most precious of all, which neither Hitler

nor any other tyrant can invade ; and that is the liberty of a man's own soul. Many men in this age have, it is true, been condemned to the most cruel fates. They have been subjected to prolonged mental torture of the most exquisite cruelty ; they have been ordered, through such torture, to give away precious secrets, to be false to their most sacred loyalties : some have known that not only their own lives but those of their loved ones would be forfeit if they preserved their integrity. Yet some have defied such threats and have endured all the consequences. Through such suffering a better world is born.

The place of suffering in the history of the human race remains as a profound mystery. Again and again the vast suffering of generations of men seems to have no meaning, no reward ; and yet it has woven itself into the texture of human history, which, seen as a whole, is not meaningless. If all men belong to one another, then all in some sense share the suffering, as all share the joy of life and of victory over suffering and evil. Long struggles against tyranny and against alien rule provide some of the most glorious chapters in human history. Most men cherish their ideals of freedom and justice more highly than their safety and comfort. There seems to be no reason in the nature of man, therefore, why a whole nation should not act together in a manner which, while risking freedom today, may win for all men freedom from the burden and terror of war preparations tomorrow and for all time. A martyr nation is not an easy conception but it is not inconceivable. General disarmament by consent would be pleasanter for all concerned, and Gandhi would certainly have supported all genuine efforts in that direction. But he believed that progress in human affairs is more often achieved by great spiritual

adventure, and by willing self-suffering, than by prudence conditioned by fear. Perhaps what will happen is that some one great nation will say : “ We have decided to begin total disarmament at once ” ; whereupon the other nations will say, with sighs of relief : “ Good, then we will do the same ”. Gandhi believed that example, here as in other fields, is far more effective than precept. Some great power must take courage in its hands and begin to act ; then the whole climate of the world will change. The statesmen who appear to the opposite side to be devils will begin to appear as humans after all. It was Gandhi’s conviction that trust begets trust, whilst fear breeds fear ; therefore let political leaders begin to show trust of the enemy, and they may turn him into a friend, and a trustworthy man. Let them avoid the final baseness, which is to surrender their convictions, to keep silence because public opinion does not seem to be ready for the action they see to be necessary. In that case, the wise man will abandon office and do his utmost to educate public opinion. For the statesman, as for all other men, the first loyalty must be to his own conscience.

This is such a vital aspect of Gandhi’s life and of his message to the world that it has seemed necessary to dwell on it at length ; but it is not the whole of Gandhi.

His immense belief in the dignity and strength of a fearless man governed his thought in the economic field no less than the political. He perceived that it is the peasant, the cultivator of the soil, who silently keeps the world alive through times of war and conquest and pestilence. From time to time a whole country-side may be devastated by the scourge of famine or disease or by the sword of the conqueror ; but unless the land becomes infertile and reverts to desert, as soon as the pestilence of

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disease or conquest passes, men return to the land and begin to plough it and sow it and reap crops again. So is the world maintained. It was therefore the dumb millions of food-producing peasants who were Gandhi's chief concern and on whose backs he built his hopes.

In India he found a peasantry whose independence was largely undermined. The British had taught them not to think for themselves, and not to be self-dependent for their clothes and their tools. "We command, you obey", said the British, "for we know what is good for you; we will supply you with better clothes and tools than you can make, and you can buy them at world-market prices." "But you need not obey", said Gandhi, "you can be wholly independent. Moreover, if you make your own clothes and your own tools, you will be beginning the fight against your abject poverty. You can do it for yourselves." So he evolved a "constructive programme", which ignored the alien ruler and laid the foundations of political independence on the firm base of economic independence. Let each village first learn to live as an independent unit, feeding itself, making its own clothes from its own cotton, providing its own housing and its own essential tools; then, when it has learnt to stand on its own feet, when it has an upright backbone of its own, it can go on to an honest exchange of goods and services with neighbouring villages, with far away cities, even with the ends of the earth.

It should be noted here that Gandhi was not, as western people commonly suppose, opposed to all machinery and to all industrialisation. The spinning-wheel itself, which he asked every Indian to ply, was, as he freely admitted, a machine. He was an enthusiast for the sewing-machine, which he regarded as a true

labour-saving device. Women, he saw, were usually obliged to work much harder than men. In most parts of the world they have little time to sit gossiping under the village banyan tree or in the public-house, or wherever it may be ; their fingers are busy, cooking, making and mending clothes, cleaning the house, often also working in the fields, from dawn till late at night. So the sewing-machine, which can be brought into every home, is to be regarded as a veritable godsend. Gandhi's objection was to the craze for machinery — a craze comparable to the addict's constant yearning for more cigarettes or more alcohol or more opium. The test of every new invention should be : Is it really the servant of man ? — not just to make a few men richer whilst others become slaves to the machine or are thrown out of work. Far better that thousands of men should carry heavy loads on their heads up steep banks to build a great dam rather than that the work should all be done by great cranes while the men and their families sit idle and starve in their villages. And today in India those are the only alternatives. In twenty years' time the economy may have been so transformed that more labour-saving machinery will be good for India. Gandhi utterly repudiated the argument that the cheapest way of producing goods was necessarily the most economic from the point of view of general human well-being ; and it is human well-being, not cheapness, that must be the final test.

His constructive programme did, indeed, look to a transformation of Indian life, by fostering village industries and the better use of the land and the breeding of better and fewer cattle. These, Gandhi held, are among the reforms necessary before large-scale industrialisation can be usefully introduced into a country like India,

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whose capital consists largely of man-power and sun-power. Let man become healthy ; let nature be harnessed to the service of man ; and then industrial development is due. Even so, it is likely that India will be well advised to avoid the industrial concentration that has disfigured the West. In all this, Gandhi has something to say that all Asia and Africa, perhaps some parts of Europe and America too, may well ponder.

Nor was Gandhi blind to the population problem. He did not, as is sometimes thought, advocate celibacy as a general rule of life — it was not even the rule in his own *ashram* or settlement. Celibacy, in his view, is only suited to the very few. But he did believe in the possibility and the desirability of sexual self-control. This was a corollary of his belief in human dignity. Although he saw India's large population as potentially her greatest capital asset, he accepted the need for limiting it, and he believed that men and women could learn to limit their sex-life without artificial aids, and without psychological injury.

The constructive programme of Gandhi involved the destruction of ancient abuses such as untouchability. The rich must shed their riches and become trustees or elder brothers to their poor neighbours. Work that involves men in filth and unpleasantness, the work of the *bhangi* or sweeper, for instance, which has been despised as the most menial, should rather be treated as the most honourable of all professions. Gandhi's economic and social revolution involved, first and foremost, a change of mind, a wholly new attitude towards manual labour, and especially towards the so-called menial tasks.

The surest way of bringing about such a change of mind is to begin with a new kind of education. So,

nai talim, New Education, became central to his whole programme. Children should learn as much by the work they do as by book-learning. If their minds and bodies develop in harmony, there is a good prospect that they will learn to live in harmony with their neighbours ; moreover, “ basic education ”, as evolved by Gandhi in association with Dr. Zakir Hussein and others, tends at every stage to emphasise co-operation for the common good, not selfish competition for top positions. Gandhi’s central idea was that “ work, done with integrity and intelligence, is ultimately the only proper medium through which human beings can be truly educated and that schools must become active centres of ‘ doing ’ and ‘ learning by doing ’ both organised in integral relationship with each other. This appreciation of the intrinsic relationship between doing, learning and living is no accidental off-shoot, which Gandhiji’s philosophy of life has put forth ; it springs from the deepest sources of his thought. He has been a worker — and in contact with workers — throughout his life. He knows, through first-hand experience and observation, that all real value is created through honest work and that true culture is even more emphatically a product of the field, the farm and the workshop than of the library and the lecture-room.”²

The author of these sentences goes on to show that Gandhi wished the youth of India to learn, in their school years, to “ grapple with obstinate raw materials like cotton and wool and wood, and the earth as the field of agriculture ”. Their books will become aids to their activity, “ and the knowledge gained will be integrated into character and personality ”. Nor was

² *Gandhiji, His Life and Work*, “ Basic Education ” by K. G. Saiyidain, pp. 207-8 (Published on his seventy-fifth birthday, October 2, 1944).

Gandhi's desire that the produce of school craft-work should be sold in the market a perverse desire to reintroduce the evils of "child labour". What, asks Mr. Saiyidain, are in fact the evils of child labour? Not labour as such. All healthy children love physical activity; to encourage such activity is not to force children to work when they would prefer to play. "The real objection to child labour rests on the inhuman and insanitary conditions under which children are condemned to work in factories (sometimes also in their homes) and in the divorce between purpose and activity, which characterises its processes". With proper safeguards, the demand that children shall learn to do work in school that produces useful, saleable articles means that "craft work is . . . more than a mere hobby or pastime, it will inculcate thoroughness, efficiency, the economic use of time and resources and the other habits and qualities associated with true craftsmanship." Children like to feel that they are doing things that matter, that they are not condemned to mere childish playfulness. Anyone who has seen classes in basic education at work in the villages of India must be convinced that the great majority, if not indeed all the children, are completely absorbed and happy as they deftly ply their spinning-wheels and other tools.

Mr. Saiyidain thus sums up the aim of basic education: "He (Gandhi) aims at exalting co-operation above competition, service above exploitation, non-violence above violence. Above all, his educational scheme . . . is inspired by the hope that, by making all children learn co-operatively through craft work, thus sharing the life and labour of the masses, it will not only release their productive powers for the service of the common good

but deepen their sense of humanity and kinship with their fellowmen all over the world.”³

In such an education, literacy comes as a natural part of the growing inquisitiveness of an enquiring mind. It becomes the gateway, not to cheap trash, horror-comics or predigested popular science and “culture”, but to the heritage of scientific research, imaginative daring, philosophical discussion and poetic insight and imagery that form the imperishable literature of mankind. These things cannot be imposed from above or from outside ; they must be absorbed by growth from within.

Here is a test that Gandhi offered to every man who aspires to be a good citizen : “ Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test : Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it ? Will it restore him to a control over his life and destiny ? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj (self-rule) for the hungry and spiritually starving millions ? Then you will find your doubt and your self melting away.”

Perhaps Gandhi is the first important political leader in the world who has consistently kept the needs of the poorest, and above all the voiceless poor of the villages, who are often beyond the sight and the thought of modern social reformers, in the forefront of his mind and heart. To the day of his death, he had them constantly in his mind. He was always at home when he was among them, and he felt imprisoned when he had to dwell in cities. As far as was possible for a man who had to live the life he was called to, and who had travelled about

³ op. cit., pp. 210-11.

the earth and been educated in London, he identified himself in his every day life with the poorest and the lowliest and the lost. He must abandon everything that he did not strictly need, not because of the spiritual efficacy of asceticism ; in the proper sense, Gandhi was not an ascetic. But, so long as one man remained in abject poverty, he held that possession of anything he did not need was a form of theft. Many of his close friends he considered thieves. He tried not to be one himself.

Gandhi was to the day of his death very Victorian in mind. It was not for nothing that some of his most formative years had been passed in the England of the 1890s. Thus, he tended to see the world in black and white, good and evil ; he had little patience with those who sought to excuse their moral or even their physical failings by psychological jargon about inherited tendencies or maladjusted social backgrounds, or by claiming that they were by nature extroverts or introverts. Man is the captain of his soul. If he lacks strength, let him seek it from the source of all strength.

Here is an example of his ability to see life in its sharper outlines. In *Young India* of 1925 he defined the "Seven Social Sins". They are Politics without Principles, Wealth without Work, Pleasure without Conscience, Knowledge without Character, Commerce without Morality, Science without Humanity, Worship without Sacrifice.

At heart Gandhi was not so much a politician or an economist as a man of religion : or, one might truthfully say, a man of prayer. That word "prayer" causes many moderns to wrinkle their brows. "Prayer? What are you talking about? Is it not outworn superstition? Do you

believe, did Gandhi believe, that the course of Nature will be altered because you ask some invisible, unknowable, probably non-existent creator to change the laws of cause and effect just to suit your whims ?” Gandhi’s ideas of prayer were fairly orthodox — at least in outward semblance. It is true that he said he did not believe in a personal God ; but he talked about God a great deal, and he prayed to him regularly. He said that God is Truth and Truth is God. Gandhi, like Socrates, claimed to hear the voice of God (or truth) as an “ inner voice ”, prompting him, even ordering him, to do this and that. In fact, Gandhi was a mystic ; but he was a very matter of fact mystic : no dreamer of heavenly dreams, no visionary who saw things unutterable when in a state of trance. When the inner voice spoke to him, it was to tell him what to do tomorrow — how to act more effectively to bring union of heart between Hindus and Muslims, or how to hasten the downfall of untouchability.

Essentially, one may say that what Gandhi seemed to find in his prayer-life or his religious life was a vital companionship, an assurance of support. He was not, as many men are in this age, a man who lived in terror of his own loneliness. Through much of his life he found himself driven along a lonely path, often abandoned or misunderstood even by his friends ; but he was so sure of his union with the God of truth that he was always on top of the world. During the weeks of horror, in the autumn of 1947, when it sometimes seemed as if the Punjab upheaval would bring ruin to the newly established independent state of India ; at a time when he was drinking the bitterest dregs of disillusionment with the Hindu political leaders of North India ; when he declared again and again that he had no longer any

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desire to live in such an India ; day after day I saw him in deep and intimate converse with his overburdened friends and colleagues, Rajagopalachari, Patel, Nehru and others ; and within five minutes of the colleague having entered the room a gust of carefree laughter would come from the corner of the room where they were sitting together.

On January 15, 1948, Gandhi broke his twenty-four hours' silence to tell the crowd assembled at the prayer-ground that he could endure the violence no longer ; he had spent nearly four months in and around Delhi trying to bring security back to the lives of the Muslims remaining in India ; and whatever might be happening to Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, the only India he cared to live in was one that allowed each man to keep his own religious faith inviolate without fear and without discrimination. In a last effort to bring peace to the city of Delhi, and if possible to all India, he had resolved from that moment to embark on a fast without limit. That fast brought peace to Delhi, a peace that has scarcely been broken since. It also led directly to his death at the hands of angry Hindus. Yet only ten hours before he made that momentous declaration, revealing the torture of his soul, I had watched him having a happy laugh in dumb show with a little girl.

A man who had learnt such serenity amidst such upheavals surely knew something of the true secret of living. Many years before, in South Africa, he had undertaken a course of self-discipline so that he might be free from sexual desire, from temperamental conflicts, from self-love ; free to devote himself to the service of others. In giving himself to others, in entering into the lives of innumerable men and women, he had found the

inner peace that nothing can destroy. He was no longer his own ; he had surrendered self, in order that God, love, compassion — call it what you will — might take possession. If ever there was a happy man on earth it was Gandhi ; for even while he shared to the full the agony of his times, he lived beyond it, in the realms of truth and harmony where discord and violence are not. Among his few personal possessions he treasured the images of the three little monkeys : “Hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil”. Although he shared the suffering of a world torn to pieces by evil, in his own life evil seemed to have died.

CHAPTER IV

VINOBA BHAVE AND THE NEW COMMUNITY

GANDHI IS dead. What remains of his life and influence ? His political heir is Jawaharlal Nehru, and in the next chapter I shall attempt to show how Nehru and his colleagues have been trying to give a new form to democracy in modern Asia. But Gandhi, though he was in politics to the end of his life, never considered the forms of government or the processes of legislation to be of primary importance. Those things would look after themselves if the spirit of the people were sound. To Gandhi, perhaps the major crime of the British was that they had, in his view, undermined the spirit of self-reliance in the Indian people. Gandhi wanted to see India a land of happy villages, where each village was a self-reliant little republic, capable of looking after its own affairs, and of improving its own economy, forming a small unit in a well-knit national life. The economic and social health of India could not be imposed from above ; it must grow from below.

Free India could not suddenly reverse all the tendencies of the previous century. Her senior civil servants, many of them men of great ability and integrity, who had worked in the British system, could not be expected

suddenly to turn round to the mass of the citizens and say : “ Now it is for you to direct our steps ; from today we are your humble servants ”. And even if they had done so — perhaps some tried to — the answer would at best have been incoherent. Indians are not different from other human beings. Although Gandhi had said that he had no wish to replace white domination and exploitation by brown, there was no lack of ambitious politicians, officials and men of wealth willing enough to don the Gandhi cap just to show that they accepted the new order, who saw the disappearance of the British as a means of establishing their own domination. They would now become the rulers. And to a large extent they did. Nehru and his colleagues might do their best to curb this tendency ; but they could not at the same time both direct the new government and keep effective contact with the masses ; the political leaders of free India were too pre-occupied to give time and energy to the leading of popular movements for economic and social reform — though Nehru himself, with astounding energy, has continued in his own person to undertake more of this than would seem to be humanly possible. Consequently, either reform and development must still be directed almost entirely from above, or some new force must be discovered to influence and direct the lives of the dumb, semi-starved millions. Many hundreds of devoted followers of Gandhi have, indeed, continued their single-minded service to the masses at the grass-roots : organising or training for basic education, fostering village industries, attacking untouchability in its hydra-headed forms, and so on. But the world today is moving too fast for these humble, scarcely visible efforts to be adequate. They can easily be lost in the vast size of

India, with her three hundred and seventy million souls. Some new Gandhi was needed who could capture the imagination of the dumb millions. He has appeared, and his name is Vinoba Bhave.

It is not surprising that Vinoba Bhave has proved himself to be the man for this task. For thirty years he worked in close association with Gandhi. Gandhi was so much impressed with him that, even when Vinoba first came to work with him in 1917, aged only twenty-two, he saw in him one who in some respects was already a teacher and not only a pupil. Gandhi was always ready to seek advice from his juniors, but in the course of the years he would turn to Vinoba more, probably, than to any other, especially when he was faced with perplexing moral problems.

Gandhi divided his followers roughly into two groups. There were those who were prepared to be active in politics, to answer the call for law-breaking at times of civil disobedience. This necessarily involved periods of imprisonment. Others, whose bent was social service or village work, were expected to keep clear of politics. Vinoba was in the second category. He has always been a shy man, so it was no hardship for him to keep away from the din of party politics. But Gandhi did not always keep the distinction rigid — still less did the government, which in times of civil disobedience was apt to regard all Gandhi's followers as rebels at heart, whether they had openly broken the law or not. So Vinoba Bhave served some prison sentences, like many other constructive workers. Nevertheless, there was some surprise when, in 1941, Gandhi called on Vinoba to be the first law-breaker in the individual civil disobedience of that time. Perhaps the choice was partly due to

Gandhi's desire to show that the protest against the government's war policy was not primarily a political challenge. In any case it was a striking indication of the confidence he had in Bhave. And to most followers of Gandhi it seemed only natural that, after Gandhi's death, Vinoba Bhave should become the leading figure in the constructive programme.

It was more than four years, however, before Vinoba, whose reluctance for the limelight has always been characteristic, took the decisive steps which have brought him world fame.

The story has often been told, but it must be briefly recounted again here. After independence, India had trouble with Hyderabad, a large state in the South whose territory was completely surrounded by Indian territory, but whose Muslim Nizam and ruling caste strove to stave off absorption into India. As a side-line of the disturbances that developed, Communists became active in the South-eastern districts of the State, especially in Telangana district. Landlordism was unusually oppressive there ; land-hunger was acute. A number of acts of violence occurred ; law and order practically broke down. The Indian occupation of Hyderabad in 1948 did not immediately ease things. Vinoba Bhave was first invited to Hyderabad in 1949, but his visit at that time was only to the capital city, where I heard him address a large audience of Hindus and others, who met together for prayers with him ; he told them in very direct terms what practical steps they must take in order to bring back confidence to their Muslim neighbours, who had been living in fear and danger ever since the change of government a year before.

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In Hyderabad city conditions improved. Vinoba's proposals helped; and in any case the new government was able to make its authority effective there; but Telangana was still an area of terror. Landlords were murdered; landless labourers took possession of their lands, but without legal title. How was order to be re-established? The local people appealed again to Vinoba. He felt he must respond. What to do, he could not say. But he would go. Telangana is two hundred miles from his *ashram* at Paunar (a village nine miles from Gandhi's *ashram* at Sevagram). He would go on foot — as he always does. Perhaps he would get light on the matter as he walked. This is how Vinoba himself afterwards described what happened :

Though I had not directly attended to the communist problem of Hyderabad so far, ever since Gandhiji's death I had been watching it and keeping myself informed of its violent developments. I confess that incendiary and murderous activities, painful as they were, did not unnerve me, because I knew that the birth of a new culture has always been accompanied with blood-baths in the past, and hence there is nothing new in it. What is needed is not to get panicky, but to keep our heads cool and find means of resolving the conflict.

The Government have kept a special police force in Telangana to restore peace. Policemen are not expected to think out and institute reforms. They can only use their arms and strike terror. If it were a question of clearing a forest of tigers, their employment would be quite useful. But here they have to deal with human beings, however mistaken and misguided. There is a new idea and a goal behind these activities, and where a new ideal is born mere repression cannot combat it. Not that the Government do not understand this; but they have a responsibility to protect life and property, and so I do not blame them for the measures employed by them.

But I had all along been seeking a better remedy. "Move on", say the Vedas ; and I thought that a tour through the district was essential to seek it. Tour develops thought. But the tour which does this is not undertaken in motor cars, railway trains and aeroplanes. . . . Teachers like Buddha, Mahavir, Kabir, Nanak, Namadev, Chaitanya preferred to go on foot in order to deliver their messages far and wide. Thought becomes clear, mature and remodelled while you walk.

This happened to me as I walked to Shivarampalli from Wardha. All the way I was seeking a solution of the problem which the Communists tried to solve in their own way. One day, the story of the "Vamana " incarnation¹ flashed through my mind, and, Brahman that I was, I took it up and commenced begging gifts of land.

I was not confident of the result. How can a few drops of nectar sweeten a sea? But God put strength into my words. Somehow people understood the spirit. They realised that events that were happening would bring a revolution into their lives, which was beyond the capacity of any government. They began to give free gifts of land, at times beyond my expectation. For instance, at one place eighty acres of land were needed for Harijans (landless outcastes) and a single landowner gave one hundred. A landowner of Nalgunda, who had already given fifty acres, later on gave five hundred following a settlement of a family dispute. It was a fourth of his total share.

But this is a mere beginning and a gesture. The spirit must spread and catch all possessors of property. A gift of a few acres out of a thousand cannot solve the whole problem. Moreover, it is not a problem of one or two districts, it is not even a problem of India alone. It is a world problem—or rather a revolutionary programme. And when a revolution in the way of life is contemplated, it must take place in the mind. A mere material gift of a hundred acres out of ten thousand is not enough. As a friend and well-wisher of both the rich and the poor, I could feel happy

¹ This is the story of how God, incarnated as "Vamana ", a beggar, had been granted a boon, of as much land as he could cover in three paces : he thereupon transformed himself into a giant, and covered the whole world in two paces.

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only if I could make the rich look upon the poor as members of their own family. I desired them to consider how they would take the birth of one more son. Suppose an owner of ten thousand acres has four sons, and a fifth is born later. Would he not have to make five shares of his property instead of four? I asked the landlords to regard me as an additional heir born to them, and give me my share for the benefit of the poor.

A psychological change like this cannot be brought about by war and violent revolution. It can be brought about only by the methods of Buddha, Christ, Ramanuja and other great teachers.

Ultimately it has to be the dedication of one's all for the well-being of all. Those who have must look upon those who have not as a mother looks upon her hungry child. She feeds it before she feeds herself; she starves before she allows it to starve. Let those who possess the strength, skill and knowledge of producing wealth, or the power of holding it, dedicate them to the service of the poor. I desire that the love necessary for doing this is generated in the heart of everyone.

I had an interview with some of the Communists in the jail at Warangal. One of the questions which they put to me was to the following effect: "Do you want to resettle the rich in their old homes? Do you think that their hearts are changed? They simply deceive you." I did not discuss these questions there because I had gone there only to study their minds. But here is my faith. If God dwells in the hearts of all beings, and controls every movement of theirs, even their breathing, and if he is the source of all inspiration, a change of heart is always possible. The Lord of the Ages is eternally present, and if He desires a change, that change has to be. When a man falls into a stream, it is not only his own capacity of swimming, but also the force of the current that helps him, and it does so, whether he likes it or not. Similarly, when the current of the ages goes this way, it will help him in changing his heart.

All this is quoted from a speech made by Vinoba Bhave in September 1951. The first gift of land was on April 18, 1951. Between that date and June 6, 1951, when he left

Telangana, he had collected twelve thousand acres of free land ; no village that he had visited refused to give.

All India was stirred to hear of his achievement. But it was one thing to persuade landlords already terrorised by Communists to give their land ; were they not making a virtue of necessity ? What reason was there to suppose that the same thing could be done elsewhere ? Here again we may quote Vinoba's own words :

It was doubted whether the same experiment could be carried on in other parts of India, in the absence of that background. It was necessary to test it (the idea of land-gifts, or as it has become known, *Bhoodan Yajna*, which is the Hindu expression signifying a land-gift) in other parts in order to clear that doubt. In the meantime I received an invitation from Pandit Nehru to visit Delhi in order to place my views before the Planning Commission (which was then preparing the first Five Year Plan). It provided me with a reason for starting on another walking tour. In the course of the two months which I took to reach Delhi, I received some eighteen thousand acres of land. I then realised that the masses were eager to welcome this non-violent revolution.

So, month after month, year after year, he and his associates have continued the work. By June 1958 nearly four and a half million acres had been given, though only three quarters of a million had been finally distributed. By far the largest amounts of land have been given in the States where Vinoba himself has walked, especially in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Andhra, Bombay. But notable amounts have been procured from donors in some States, such as Kerala (better known as Travancore-Cochin) where devoted workers, some of them quite young, have done their best to follow Vinoba's example. Perhaps one of the most

striking developments so far has been in Maharashtra, where the first determined effort to get land-gifts was undertaken by a number of workers in late 1956. Within three months 43,000 acres were given by 6,700 donors ; and of these already 5,000 acres had been distributed to 1,200 needy families. Moreover, 100 villages had agreed together to give the whole of their land for fair redistribution to those who could best cultivate it and who were most in need of land. This new phase of the movement, called *Gramdan*, started while Vinoba was in Orissa in 1955. Before he left that State, no fewer than 1,300 villages had thus surrendered the whole of their land, in order that it might be fairly redistributed. This does not actually mean giving the land into common ownership, though it comes near to it. It does signify that all or most of the landowners in the village have agreed to surrender their right to hold on to the land which, in some cases, has been in one family for many generations. It cannot be too often repeated that all this does not mean the increased fragmentation of holdings. Generally the result is rather the consolidation of holdings, and the rationalisation of land-holding.

It is not my intention here to give a full estimate of the effectiveness of this Land-gifts Mission, but rather to try and understand the mind of the man who has inspired it. Nevertheless, in the world of today, practical success or failure to implement noble ideals is so essential an aspect of their world-wide appeal and ultimate validity, that something must be said in an attempt to appraise it so far. Perhaps the best way to do this will be by quoting an illuminating article from an Indian periodical, in which one of Vinoba's fellow-workers has given typical examples of the difficulties that arise in

connection with the distribution of the land that has been given. The distribution has been slow, partly, but not solely, because Vinoba is determined that it shall be done well and thoroughly, so that the most deserving really receive the land, and when they do so they will have the necessary tools and seed and other equipment to enable them to cultivate it successfully.

Thus, at one village, the landlord who had given the land, once it had been distributed, began to harass the new cultivators as if they were still his labourers. They still worked on his land for wages, in addition to the work they did on their own plots. He still treated them in his old high-handed manner, and finally things came to a head when he withheld wages from women workers who had been absent from work for a few hours in order to feed their babies. This he had never done in the old days. Moreover, he ignored the legal minimum wage. Finally, the workers in eleven villages all united to withhold their labour, and the landowner only surrendered after they had continued their strike for a month.

Such self-reliance on the part of those who have been landless labourers is rare in rural India, and it seems to indicate that the dumb millions are beginning to sense a new self-respect. All these workers had now acquired land of their own ; they were attending school and sending their children to school ; they had dug a new well by their own unpaid labour ; they had built a new tank for preserving rain-water ; they had brought under effective cultivation land that had not been cultivated for a hundred years. The men and women were both finding time to spin their own cotton clothes. The women, who had lived in seclusion, were coming to public prayers each day. Indeed, these crushed and voiceless peasants

had experienced a new birth. But the landlord, in this case, had hardly shown a change of heart. The only change of heart was among his tenants, who now knew how to withstand his tyranny.

In a neighbouring village, the story is different. Here too, the new owners, *Bhoomiputras*, as they are called, or land recipients, were harassed in various ways at the beginning. But they broke down the ill-will of their wealthier neighbours, in this case, not by ceasing to work for them, but by precisely the opposite behaviour — in fact by continuing to give the labour expected of them, in spite of ill-treatment. In this case, evil was conquered by good, and the ill-disposed richer villagers withdrew their cattle, which they had deliberately driven onto land that had been assigned to the landless labourers.

In a third village in the same part of Bihar, the *Bhoomiputras* refused the land that was offered to them, as it was poor land. They said they preferred to continue to be wage-earners, with some security, rather than be obliged to live on land that could not support them properly. In this case, the manager of the absentee landlords was so impressed by their demeanour that he assigned them land of a much better quality close to their homes. He also had some fresh wells dug for them. They, on their side, then brought a large proportion of their produce as an offering or rent when the first crops were harvested. Whereupon the manager said to them: "The land belongs to you. Vinobaji has given it to you. Enjoy the full fruits of your labour. Take away all your produce. We all are fortunate to have Vinoba in our midst. We are glad that he has given us an opportunity to return to you what really did belong to you. Go and be happy."

Here, at least, we seem to see the change of heart that Vinoba hopes for.

Vinoba has his own ideas of the future economy of India — indeed of the world. Recently he expressed himself in the following words :

My idea of looking upon the whole world as the common heritage of humanity does not mean that there would be no regional self-sufficiency in economic matters. On the contrary, every village, every district or county ought to be self-sufficient as far as primary necessities are concerned, and atomic power could be of great help in decentralising industry so that there can be highly developed tools and machinery in every village. Thanks to the scientific knowledge at our command, we can have enough physical comforts for everybody even if we restrict our choice to our immediate surroundings. But we must stop hankering after more than enough if we want to avoid disaster.

Western civilisation, on both sides of the iron curtain, seems to begin from the premise : increase your appetite ; learn to hanker after more than enough, and more and more and ever more. Vinoba advises the world to turn to the old copy-book maxim that “ enough is as good as a feast ” — or even better than a feast. He suggests that we might take this maxim out of the copy-book and begin to live by it. He himself lives a more ascetic life than Gandhi did ; but he does this, not, it seems, in order to mortify the flesh, but because he likes it and because he finds it the healthiest way to live. He is all for harnessing natural forces for the service of man, and increasing production ; but that does not mean increasing appetites. Nor does it mean increasing “ demand ”. Pleasure is one thing ; demand another. It is one thing to enjoy all manner of luxury when the appropriate moment comes to enjoy. It is quite another thing to be

unable to live without a chromium-plated civilisation that will satisfy every gross appetite.

Vinoba has similarly taken out of the copy-book and tested the truth of the maxim that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This, too, is no kill-joy injunction, but a true law of the happy life — once it has become the practice of daily life, as it has in his case. A community that has learnt the joy of giving and sharing, and the good sense of restricting normal consumption to what is enough, will provide a solid foundation for a peaceful world.

Vinoba rarely speaks of the nation of India. He sees the need for recreating a harmonious and self-sufficient local community, whether it be a village or a small district, not as a means of building the strength of the nation, which seems to be the farthest horizon visible to most political leaders in the world today, both West and East ; but he sees this as part of the way to the upbuilding of world-wide human society. “Man must broaden his affinities”, he says, “and look upon the whole world as a common heritage of humanity, irrespective of national and other barriers, if he desires to survive the atomic age.” Science has revolutionised our life ; this may be a blessing for men, but it will not be so if it only makes the big bigger and the powerful more powerful. Scientific knowledge can be so used that “we can have enough physical comforts for everybody”. Only, when Vinoba speaks of “physical comforts” he is thinking in terms of semi-starved India not of America. “Comforts” mean good food, pure water, adequate clothes and housing, electric or atomic power, books, leisure for music, games and enjoyment, rather than private motor-cars, radio and television sets, and innumerable other mechanical toys.

What is the motive-power behind Vinoba's work? We see him as a man who, from his boyhood, has undertaken a personal discipline in order to be fit to serve God and his neighbour. For over thirty years he was content to live in the shadow of the Mahatma; when Gandhi died, his associates tried to exalt him into a position of leadership. Once and again he responded to the call, only to conclude that he had not found his public vocation yet. Then came the call from Telangana, and that, he found, was God's call. He must respond by giving himself completely.

"Fire", he says, "merely burns; it does not worry whether anyone puts a pot on it, fills it with water and puts rice into it to make a meal. It burns and that is the limit of its duty. It is for others to do theirs. The sun too does its duty without feeling concerned with how many people rise with it or keep in bed when it comes out. It is always there, punctual and ready to shine on anything that is exposed to it. It does not push the door to enter into places barred to it. It does its duty within its limitations. Like the fire and the sun, I know my limitations." Those who have lived and worked with Vinoba have found in him many of the qualities of fire and sun — not only their limitations: the lighted mind, the contagious warmth of friendship, fiery ardour of the soul, steady constancy of purpose, ability to give himself without reserve to the service of all men, rich and poor alike. In his own being he unites the qualities typical of the Indian Sanyasi with the qualities of the most ardent of western social reformers.

In January 1955, when he was touring Bengal, meeting many typical Bengalis whose thirst for knowledge and understanding is only comparable to that of ancient

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Athens, Vinoba gave a lengthy address on the need for a right synthesis of action and devotion. Here are parts of what he said :

If someone were to ask me, “ When you are glorifying action and activity so much could you also say that if a man were to devote himself to action only he will reach perfection ? ” I shall at once say, “ No ”. If a man of action had not devotion in him, had not also knowledge in him, he is likely to develop pride and attachment in himself. His action or activity void of knowledge and the sentiment of devotion will not lead him to perfection ; why, even his activity will lack fulfilment, that is, it will remain imperfect.

As an illustration have a look at Europe. Activity and action there have taken hold of men and women. People always feel short of time. Why, they have coined a phrase which indicates their attitude. Time is money, they say. They devote every moment available to them to activity or action. The spirit of action among the people of Europe and America has developed in them immense pride because their actions lack humanity which is born of devotion and also lack faith which is born of the realisation of the soul. As a consequence people in America have begun to talk of saving the world. Whenever the President of the United States of America opens his lips on the present condition of world affairs he utters the language of their responsibility to protect the countries of Asia against aggression and of safeguarding their liberties, as if God did not exist to take care of his creation and the responsibility of ordaining the affairs of the earth has devolved upon Europe and America ! As if the people of Asia totally lacked understanding and intelligence and they were specially allotted only to Russia and America. It is thus plain that mere action or activity does not lead to a proper evolution of life, but to lopsidedness and perversion. If I had occasion to travel over Europe and America and had opportunity to speak to their people, I would certainly tell them of the glory of the Vaishnava's religion of devotion for the Lord as also of the need for man to cultivate faith in his spirit or the soul. . . .

When we think of the life of society as a whole we will have to think in terms of a synthesis of various ideas, ideals and virtues. By cultivating one single virtue in its fullness an individual may hope to reach perfection but society as a whole cannot hope to do so. But people begin to argue, Would it not suffice if everyone devoted himself to singing God's name and his praises ? I would like to ask these friends : You are of course singing the Lord's praises ; why then do you eat ? Why not be content with that only ? Why not subsist on it ? And if feeding oneself was essential along with taking the Lord's name and singing his praises, is it not equally essential that your brother too is fed ? Vaishnavas devote themselves to singing the Lord's praises. But I may ask them, why then do you marry ? And if marriage is allowed with singing of God's name, is not control of the senses necessary along with it ? Indeed, is devotion possible without such control ? I have known singers of God's praises who intoxicate themselves with the sentiment of devotion and dance and weep also. I have witnessed these things with my own eyes. But when I ask charity from these devotees of the Lord their hearts become so miserly that their hands refuse to part with anything for the use of their brothers. This is not true only of devotees of the Lord in India ; in fact, the same thing can be observed among the sects of devotees all the world over.

It is therefore my humble opinion that though the wealth of ideas and ideals that the people of India possess is valuable for their journey through the modern world and though their heritage is rich, it needs to be reconsidered. . . . Contemplation of God in devotional worship is superior to mere knowledge. But when man is engrossed in contemplation he is prone to avoid action and when concentration for contemplation is over he perforce has to fall back on activity. Willingly giving up fruits of one's actions is, as the Gita reminds us, superior to contemplation. Therefore, friends, we have to bear in mind that Karma Yoga, that is, action performed without an eye on the fruit thereof, is superior to mere contemplation.

The only way to get the full quality of a man like Vinoba Bhave is to live with him. For the westerner who

cannot visit India and walk with him from village to village, the best way to meet him is to read the English translations of his talks, published week by week in the paper called *Bhoodan*. This I have now been doing for several years, and I can testify that I am never tired of reading his speeches. This in itself is surely extraordinary. It might seem that a man who, for seven years, has been going from village to village, asking for gifts of land, would be obliged to repeat the same things over and over again. But that is not his way.

On his arrival at a village, he meets the people who have land to give, and other villagers. Thus, he learns something about the problems and the possibilities of that village. Then, in the evening, prayers are held, and at the conclusion of prayers, he talks to the assembled villagers. Thus, each speech is fresh, for each is addressed to a particular village, in terms of the needs of that special village. It is impossible here to quote from many of his speeches. Let a few quotations, some from the later months of 1956 and some from 1958, suffice.

The first appears to be a discourse to fellow-workers, rather than a talk directed to a special village. "Every country", says Vinoba, "has some special characteristics. Men of character and learning are accepted as the natural leaders by our people. Reverence for the wise and the learned is a part of our national tradition. From times immemorial a sanyasi has been held in great honour by our people Changes in social customs and beliefs have been wrought by such men. Take a simple instance of bathing. Most people in India bathe regularly. Who taught them this? Take the marriage ceremony. How has it become universal? There was no penal code which

laid down these rules. Wise men created the tradition and people accepted it of their own free will. The wise men showed the way and people accepted it in good faith. It is easy, in a way, to transform our society. The wise men must bestir themselves and go out and talk to the people and live with them. Christ said that such men are the salt of the earth. I would say that they are the butter. But they must remain for ever in society. They must never separate themselves and live in isolation. If they do so they will do harm both to themselves and to society. The vogue of withdrawal has done harm. A little curds, when it is mixed with milk, turns the whole milk into good curds. The good men must establish easy communication between themselves and people around them. . . . Detachment and selflessness shine like ornaments when they are seen in men who have indwelling love in their heart. Desirelessness is a virtue when accompanied by deep love and devotion. When we have real affection for the people and are ever engaged in their service, detachment enhances one's capacity and is welcome. But if we become fastidious and hypersensitive and lose the capacity to accept people as they are and then live in our ivory tower this detachment will be no good. It will harm ourselves and society."

During October 1956, Vinoba was walking through the Tamil country, where caste distinctions are apt to be at their most acute, and where the Untouchables are still outcaste in the most literal sense. Here is an account of "A Day to Remember" as Vinoba travelled through the Tamil villages.

One afternoon a man from the village of V . . . came and saw Vinoba. His village was not included in the itinerary. He came to offer some land. When this business

was settled, he still remained in the room, and began to speak of another matter.

“ He then described the poor condition of the Harijans (Untouchables) in his village ; they lived in dirty hovels. Seeing this he had built a few more habitable cottages for them. But these cottages had remained empty because the other castes in the village were strongly opposed to his new idea. They regarded it as irreligious. The Harijans were also afraid of the angry opposition, so they did not go and live in the new cottages.” Would Vinoba perhaps include a visit to the village ? He agreed to go.

The next morning at dawn Vinoba spoke to the assembled villagers : “ The Sun-God ”, he said, “ will soon reveal himself. His rays will enter into every home. He will shine on the cottage of the Harijan as well as the house of the Brahman and the Mussalman. His rays and warmth know no discrimination. God knows no distinctions. It is a denial of God to discriminate between man and man. Why should you object and oppose if one among you built beautiful cottages for Harijans to live in ? That is against our religion. One of your saints has written that whoever will fall into the meshes of caste discrimination will destroy himself. You threaten the Harijans in your village and they are afraid of you. To frighten or to be afraid is the characteristic of animals. It is not human. Harijans should not be afraid. They should have the fearlessness which comes from love. They should also keep themselves clean ; they should bathe every day .”

“ But we do bathe every day ”, one Harijan said.

“ These people threaten us, abuse us and even beat us up, if we wear clean clothes ”, said another.

Vinobaji turned to the other group and asked : “ Do you go about terrorising these people ?” “ No. We would not mind them at all if they would keep clean ”, they said.

“ That is what they say only when you are with us ”, a Harijan complained.

“ You will all give me your word that you will now live as brothers. You must promise me that after I go away you will live in peace, love and co-operation. Now come before me and shake hands ”, said Vinobaji. No one moved.

“ If you really mean to treat these Harijans with love, even after we leave, please come forward and shake hands with them.” Still no movement. No one spoke. Minutes passed.

Vinobaji got up from the dais and walked up to a Harijan. He took him by the hand and led him to another villager and joined their hands together.

The non-Harijan villagers went on muttering : “ Of course, we have nothing against the Harijans if only they would keep clean and stop eating meat.”

“ Don’t you keep cats in your homes ? What do they eat ? Rats. You do not mind even keeping them in your kitchens. Further, remember that those who go about in clean clothes often commit the worst sins. They tell lies ; they spend their life in lechery and adultery. You should not therefore make too much of this matter of cleanliness. One should be pure inside. That is where God looks.”

The villagers soon confessed their mistake and shook hands with the Harijans. Vinobaji turned to the Harijans and said :

“ You should now stop being afraid and learn to be cleaner. The other people in the village kept you at a

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distance because they thought you were dirty. Now they are reassured. You can go and live in the new cottages immediately.”

It was now time for Vinobaji's breakfast. As he dipped the spoon in the curds, the people still surrounding him, he smiled and said : “ Look, I just touched that Harijan and will now eat my food. Obviously, I shall go to hell. Do you be more careful and go to heaven.” The tension blew off in a gust of laughter.

To those who live in western cities, or even in villages where many of the inhabitants are recent settlers, and where every house is full of modern gadgets, where, therefore, there is no ancient underlying sense of community, it may be difficult to translate such happenings into the life we know. So let us turn to some other recent speeches, in which Vinoba speaks of universal things, in which he interprets Indian traditional values into the life of today.

Thus, in September 1956, he is reported as beginning one of his village talks with these words :

We visited a high school on our way today. On one of the buildings there was a significant inscription. It said that religion, love and wisdom must ever go together. This is no doubt a very profound thought. Today we find that these three are rarely seen to exist in one place. They are to be found separately. Learning is confined to the university, love to the family and religion to the temple. Thus these three mighty factors have become virtual prisoners. . . . By segregating them, and keeping them in watertight compartments, we have polluted the waters of learning, love and religion. This has turned people into unbelievers. Our narrow and superficial lip-service of religion is responsible for the unbelief that is spreading. . . . No one thinks there is anything wrong or irreligious in exploiting the misfortune of another. We rob a man and then

go to the temple and offer some money to the priest. We are hardly aware of our hypocrisy. This has happened because religion and devotion have been kept in watertight compartments. They have not permeated our lives.

What, then, is religion to Vinoba? "Sometimes I am asked if it is necessary to have faith in God. I say, have faith in the goodness of the human heart. There is a hard core of basic goodness in every human heart. Trust that and then you need not take the name of God. . . . If you believe in God you must love all his creatures. You must feel for all those who suffer around you. *Bhoodan* is trying to make men aware of the great misery and sorrow that has permeated our society." Again, "If we could demonstrate that devotion really means contemplation of truth, love and compassion, there would be no room for any controversy. Devotion would inevitably express itself in social service."

Let us attend, too, to what he has to say about true education. "The capacity to discriminate between the immediately pleasant and the lasting is the essence of education. . . . In other words, education should give a man a capacity to understand himself. Education means self-knowledge. Without self-knowledge one becomes a slave to one's own passions. . . . Many who talk glibly about their independence do not know that they are slaves of the senses and the mind. When a man says, 'I will do what I please', actually it means, 'I will do what my senses desire'. Without a proper control over the senses a man is bound to remain a slave. Unless one learns to disassociate one's self from the senses the mind can never be free. . . . Education must give this perception and strength. . . . Children must be awakened to

the wonders of God's earth. The student must then go to a wise man and seek knowledge. This is the way one can develop mind and intellect."

Again : " We have just heard a song composed by the great poet Bharati. He has written many beautiful songs. The song we heard has a special significance. He has conveyed to us the same thought that our sages have given us from time immemorial. But it has a significance today because we have lost faith in it. The poet says, ' Return love for hate '. In this age of science this is the message of life. Mankind can only live by accepting sincerely the gospel of love. Fear creates hatred. Hatred can never be ended by hating in return. That will only multiply hatred. If you burn my house and I burn yours in revenge, fire multiplies and two houses are destroyed instead of one. . . . We are following this stupid logic in our affairs in the world today. We have become so flabby and indolent that our brains have become dull. We seem to have lost ordinary commonsense. We are literally destroying ourselves through mental and intellectual inertia. Prosperity dulls the intellect. That is why we talk of peace and invent deadlier weapons. . . . Love is a tremendous force. As the water quenches fire, so love can quench hate."

It may be said that some of these things are the commonplaces of all the great religions of mankind. But Vinoba, like those who have proclaimed them in immortal phrase in earlier ages, lives by them, and therefore they take on a new vitality. If they can be true in India, can they not be true and fit to live by elsewhere, both in private life and in the political life of the world ?

Vinoba is still on the march, walking from village to village each day. He is no longer collecting large gifts of

land for the landless, and there are some who say that his land-gifts mission has petered out. If one judges by what may perhaps be called traditional western standards, this may be true. Five years ago, he proposed a target of fifty million acres, enough for every landless family in India to have a tolerable land-holding. Less than five million acres have been given, and probably less than half of this has been effectively distributed. Stories are told, not only by critics, but even by his fellow-workers, of disillusioned villagers who thought his visit was bringing the millennium to them ; and yet they find themselves no better off than before. Failure ? It looks rather like it. One of his closest fellow-workers, in discussing this frustration, quoted the New Testament parable of the man who had his devil cast out ; but into the empty space there came seven devils worse than before.

But then there is the other side. He is still on the march. He is still telling the millions of village people who listen to him that their salvation is in their own hands. He is pressing for the formation of peace brigades, *shanti senas*, which can replace the police. Indeed, such brigades are being trained, are operating, and have helped to keep or to restore the peace in several situations of sharp conflict. He is showing ways by which the smallest child can lead the way in the new life of giving and sharing, instead of grabbing and grasping. Those who walk with him, whether from East or from West, still find in him one who speaks with prophetic authority, and not as the scribes (or the politicians).

Vinoba, unlike Gandhi, is not interested in organisation ; to some extent he fears it. He has seen too much direction from above in the Indian villages ; he wants to see the people working out their own salvation. But the

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great mass of Indian villagers today are too helpless to respond immediately to his challenge. They need some help in their first faltering footsteps along the path of community and self-help. In fact, in most parts of India, there are men and women, not enough of course, but still a considerable and a growing number, who have been caught up into the *Bhoodan* movement, and are trying to consolidate and to follow up in the areas where Vinoba has turned the soil. Moreover, unless I am misinformed, the government's community projects, which will be examined in the next chapter, are year by year putting greater emphasis on village self-help and self-direction ; and they appear in many cases to be working in much closer harmony with the *Bhoodan* workers than was happening a few years ago.

We are still left to ponder on the role of the prophet. His role is not primarily the same as that of the social reformer, even of the political revolutionary. He is, in the language of the parable of Jesus, a sower who is sowing seed. For ten years, Vinoba has been sowing in men's hearts the seeds of unselfishness, of devotion to the good of the community, of the joy of public service for the needy without any thought of reward. Some of that seed has been falling in good soil. India and the world are the better for it. It does not bring the kingdom of God immediately to all the villages of India ; but it brings light into dark places, and hope to those who are in despair.

CHAPTER V

DEMOCRACY IN THE NEW INDIA

IN THE days when Gandhi was leading the movement for Indian freedom from British rule, he wrote :

We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or through the exploitation of other countries. I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be used for the benefit of mankind My love, therefore, of nationalism, or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die so that the human race may live. There is no room for race-hatred here.

Gandhi then, like Mazzini, the prophet of Italian nationalism a century before him, put a man's duty to humanity before his duty to the nation — and if the two seemed to conflict, it was the demand of the nation that must be rejected. He himself served this principle most plainly when, in the early months of freedom, after the partition of Pakistan, he resisted with his life the furious onslaughts by Hindus and Sikhs on some of the Muslims remaining in India.

Gandhi wanted India to be free in order that the dumb, semi-starved millions might be released from their

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abject poverty. I once heard him assure his close friend, C. F. Andrews, that if he could be convinced that the single-minded purpose of the British Government in India was to serve the poor above all else, he would accept the continuance of British rule, even if he was the only Indian to do so. But he quickly added that he knew quite well that this would never be, because an alien government is always bound to look first and foremost to its own security. Therefore, he had decided that the first need was to get rid of alien rule, not because Indian rule would necessarily be better, but because the essential task of tackling the "brown exploitation" of the Indian masses could not begin till the British burden had been lifted from their backs.

To quote his actual words again : " The test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among the masses. The hungry millions ask for one poem — invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow

" I do not draw a sharp distinction between economics and ethics An economics that inculcates Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest

" We may not be deceived by the wealth to be seen in India. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest.

" Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will

have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient khadi (hand-made cloth) with which to cover himself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely non-violent means."

In the midst of this "social century", as General Smuts called it, in a country where the millions have been as abjectly poor as in India, where the contrast between rich and poor has been so gross, democracy must mean food for all no less than votes for all. As we shall see, India already has votes for all. Ten years after the coming of freedom, have all Indians food, clothing, shelter, land? How far has free India remembered the words of the man whom they constantly claim to be "the father of the nation"? Some part of the answer has already been given in the previous chapter. But what is the new government doing to discharge its obligation to Gandhi on the one hand and to the starving millions on the other?

Broadly speaking, the answer must be that it has worked out and launched two Five-Year Plans, the first of which was completed in 1956. These two plans cover the whole field of social and economic development. Statistics are now available to indicate the achievement of the first five years, and such statistics are of real significance. There is, however, something more important than statistics. Are the dumb millions learning to speak, even to speak out against their exploiters? Are they beginning to feel that they have a free place of their own in a free country? Are they becoming something more human than mere beasts of burden?

Sardar Tarlok Singh, formerly of the Indian Civil Service in British days, one of the most

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independent-minded and reliable of India's remarkable administrative service today, who is Joint Secretary of the National Planning Commission, wrote a brief survey in April 1956, from which the following is quoted :

Since the war, many countries have been engaged in planning, each with reference to its own problems and with due regard to its conditions and traditions. Out of this world-wide attempt to raise living standards and strengthen and reorganise social and economic life, a great deal of new experience has emerged. In planning, therefore, more and more we draw upon our own experience as well as our understanding of the experience of others. Thus, on the one hand, national planning serves to make each country more self-reliant ; on the other, it increases interdependence between countries. As it develops, planning also becomes more complex. It is a means principally for achieving long-term social and economic aims, but it has to become more flexible, more capable of adaptations and adjustments at short notice.

For countries like India, these long-term aims are set by their basic conditions. The general state of poverty in which the bulk of the people live, the low level of productivity, the growth of population, the excessive dependence on land and the weakness of the institutional framework of society are all inter-related problems. We cannot move in one direction without at the same time knowing how we propose to influence action in other directions. To give social and economic content to democratic political institutions, the speed with which changes are brought about is as important as their substance. With the small margin on which economies like ours function, continuity of development is a factor of great importance. In other words, the task is not merely one of increasing national production or of achieving social change but also of so developing the institutions of democracy that political change can be harmonised with continuity of constructive effort. Viewed from this angle, the approach to national problems set out in India's Five-Year Plan is likely to gain in significance as time passes. One of the primary aims of this plan was to set in motion currents of thought and directions of constructive

endeavour which would ensure continuous and sustained growth. The Plan avoided the error of proposing courses of action which might be spectacular for a short time, but would later involve sharp jerks and upsets

The principal results attained can be briefly stated. Firstly, the national income of the country has increased by 18 per cent and per capita income by 10 per cent. Secondly, there has been considerable increase in production. The index of agricultural production has risen by 19 points from 96 to 115. The revised index of industrial production shows a rise between 1951 and 1955 of about 26 per cent. Along with the increase of production should be mentioned the strengthening of the transport system, especially the railways. Thirdly, there has taken place a considerable mobilisation of the machinery of government, both at the Centre and in the States, for carrying out the tasks of planning. In some ways, the most significant aspect of planning is the change of outlook and motivation, both among officials and non-officials, which it has helped to bring about. In National Extension and Community Projects and in many other activities, the tasks of planning are being seen more and more as a partnership in effort between public servants and local communities and their leaders. Finally, it was during the course of the First Plan that the objective of the Socialist Pattern of Society was accepted by the country. The implications of this goal have only recently begun to be worked out. But here we have a national quest to which there is no end, whose fulfilment calls for the best that is in every one of us.

In one direction, however, there has been less success than was hoped for. The rate of economic growth has not been such as to keep pace with increase in numbers offering for work. Thus, the Second Five-Year Plan begins with a back-log of unemployed persons numbering perhaps more than five million in addition to much larger numbers who are under-employed, especially in rural areas. In our conditions, it is not enough to build up productive assets, although this must rank high as an aim of planning. The provision of work is an objective of equal importance and so long as this aim is not realised, the social and economic system will be vulnerable from within.

Here, surely, is a true echo of the voice of Gandhi, who would have asserted that there is something radically wrong with an economy that does not offer work to all who have hands and feet and brains to work with.

In January 1955, at a rather earlier stage in the first Five-Year Plan, the London *Economist* issued a special supplement on "India — Progress and Plan".

The conclusion of the *Economist* was : "India has a strong, stable and efficient government and administrative machine. Yet the strength and efficiency has been used to persuade, not coerce, to lead, not to drive. The government has not plunged into grandiose industrialisation or brutal forced savings. The peasant, upon whom the whole pyramid of India is based, has been approached as a reasonable and responsible citizen, not as a kulak, a criminal and an outcast. At the same time, the policy of persuasion and moderation has not entailed weakness. The financial policy pursued by the government has been firm. The results are there for all to see in the economic stability salvaged from war, partition, Korean inflation and the failure of the 1951 monsoon. The surge forward of the last two years would not have been so notable without steady financial control." It is possible that five years later this last sentence would have been qualified ; but the general picture remains broadly true.

Another comment from a responsible quarter is to be found in these sentences from an article in the *Christian Century* of Chicago, November 1956. The writer, Theodore A. Gill, is a member of the *Christian Century* staff. He is writing of the official attitude of the United States towards India. "Is it Nehru's socialism that holds us aloof? But what alternative is there? Have you seen India? Do you know what has to be done? Can you

honestly imagine that just happening? The necessity for central planning and control is not in question — only who shall plan and what shall be the nature of the control. Informed nonsocialists should be grateful for the dominance in India of a leader and a party who are going about the planning business with the scruples and restraints of Nehru and the Congress party. Necessary land reform is lagging right now because the parliament is loath to confiscate for redistribution large holdings without compensation. At the time of Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez canal, Nehru told a great crowd in Delhi, ' . . . the way Egypt took hold of the Suez canal was not our way. We follow a different way.' These are not the statements or the actions of the kind of socialism that rides roughshod over private sensibilities.

“ Thinking about vast and turbulent India must begin by recognising the necessity of some kind of planning, some kind of control. Irresponsible thinking may suggest that there is a kind of laissez-faire alternative. There is not. The only real alternative is in the diametrically opposite corner : totalitarianism. Free-enterprise Americans ought to be thanking all the forces of the universe that India is led by a man who believes in state control but who is almost painfully scrupulous about the rights of private property.”

These are the impressions of visitors and reporters.

A longer term English resident, Philip Zealey, who has worked with the American Friends Service Committee for the past ten years, and has had excellent opportunities of studying the “ grass-roots ” effects of the Five-Year Plans, gives the following summary of the results :¹

¹ “ The Silent Revolution ” by Philip Zealey, *Envoy*, June-July 1957.

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If you visited an average Indian villager five years ago, you would have found him fatalistic in outlook and apathetic in approach. His life had been poor and hard and was always likely to be so. No effort of his was likely to make things better : in fact things were getting worse—there was less land and more mouths to feed. The Government official only came to collect taxes or give unwelcome orders ; townsmen and foreigners only came to exploit. The villager would be outwardly friendly and hospitable, but there was an inner core of suspicion and distrust. He is intelligent—within the narrow confines of his own knowledge and environment he makes the best use of his land and his skill. He has been neglected and exploited for centuries and as yet the fact of independence has meant little to him.

On 2nd October 1952 the first battalion of a new kind of army marched into the field : an army pledged to build instead of destroy ; an army bringing new skills and new knowledge ; an army to sow love instead of hatred ; an army with high ideals pledged to inspire confidence and trust. Their officers had new and strange names : State Development Commissioner, Project Development Officer, Block Agricultural Adviser, Project Health Officer, Social Education Organiser. The ordinary soldier was first called “ village level worker ” but the quality of his work led to quick promotion and soon he became known as *gram sevak* or “ village companion ”. There were women in this army too—not many at first, but what they lacked in numbers they made up in courage and devotion to their task.

The enemy has many heads ; poverty, ill-health, ignorance, apathy, fatalism, drought, factionalism and many others. The army therefore needed many weapons. Some of these were called honesty, trustworthiness, encouragement, grass-roots approach, felt needs, improved seeds, fertilisers, minor irrigation, livestock inoculation, health education, mother and child care, safe drinking water, community centres, model schools and so on. The grand strategy was to envelop the enemy with as many prongs as possible at the same time, and to win villagers to become full allies in the struggle. In fact, the new soldiers could do nothing until they had won the villagers to their side, as there was only one soldier to

every 5,000 villagers. If one had to summarise the main achievement of Community Development in the past five years, I would say it was the winning of new allies. The united army has been formed and the real battle is now beginning. . . .

It cannot be said at this stage that the standard of living in India's villages has risen to any nationally measurable degree, but it can be said that a new climate has been created wherein standards can be raised both in terms of society and economics. The will to progress is now there.

How has this been achieved? In the first place, there have been inspiring leadership and basically sound administration. There have been many, and often justified, criticisms of the slow-moving Government machinery and of red-tapeism in general, but the administration has been sound for all that. Planning has been good and, by and large, the programme has been carried out. Secondly, the "Generals" are continually in the field and in touch with realities. Several times I have sat on the ground surrounded by village people under a banyan tree with top Government officials who have explained that development was the villagers' business: What did *they* want the Government to do to help them?

This is new talk for villagers. "Generals" usually give orders, they do not receive them. This attempt to get down to the village level has, I think, been one of the secrets of success. . . .

The backbone of the movement is the *gram sevak*. . . . His task is not an enviable one. He has to combine the qualities of a diplomat with those of a technical expert and a skilful labourer. He has to identify himself with the village and yet must not be of it. He must lead without leading. He must interpret the people to Government and Government to the people, and, when the occasion arises, provide a "cushion" for complaints from both sides. The fact that *gram sevaks* are gaining in number and stature is a tribute to the quality of their service and to a real faith in Community Development. . . .

The silent revolution is taking place in the minds of men. So far Community Development has directly touched only about two-fifths of India's 500,000 villages. The programme will not be truly national until 1961. Even so, it is a very backward and very remote

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village which has not heard of Community Development or which still thinks it is a new stunt of government for raising taxes.

So far Philip Zealey. Let me add a few first-hand experiences of my own, taken from the earlier years of the first Five-Year Plan, when only the first impact was being made on the villages.

I begin with the sight of thousands of men carrying baskets of earth on their heads to build a two-mile long dam. To my amazement, another western observer likened this to the building of the Pyramids — surely a superficial comparison. If the mere sight of swarms of people hurrying and scurrying to their work is to remind one of the Pyramids, why not the crowds swarming to offices in New York or London, often to do work as futile from the point of view of national well-being as any Egyptian Pyramid? One could wish, indeed, that those manual labourers — no indignity, surely, in manual labour — were more fully aware of the revolutionary significance for their own countryside of the work they are doing. Then, indeed, they might sing as they work. But now, perhaps they have learnt to do even that. But let us at least note some of the probable results that will follow as soon as that dam is completed. First of all, the dam, when it is complete (and today the dam I think of is complete) will help to guarantee water even in seasons of drought to several million villagers. It will save them from inundation in seasons of mighty flood. It will give them electric light and power in their villages. It will bring industry to their state, so that they can buy better and cheaper tools for cultivating their fields. And so on.

My mind is led from the thought of that vast dam to a scene in one of the villages which, as I write, may be receiving the first flow from the great reservoir. A training camp for village workers is just finishing its course. The Chief Minister of the State and his wife, both of them famed as selfless social workers, have just come on a surprise visit to see the workers (*gram sevaks*) before they spread out into the villages where they are to carry the "good news". We sit out on the parched ground, the Chief Minister sitting on the ground just like the rest of us. Most big men, whether in India or anywhere else in the world, think it appropriate to "improve the occasion" with a few, or even not so few, chosen words of uplift. Not so this Chief Minister. He has come to find out what the young men and women have been learning, not to give them an extra lesson. So he turns to one and another, including, sooner or later, every member of the group, and asks him or her how to deal with such and such a situation. He is the examiner, if you like, but the kindly examiner, who is determined to find out what the examinee has learnt, not what he still has not learnt. In due course, when confidence has been established, he gives them the chance to ask questions. Have they any complaints to make about the State Government, for instance? Yes, says one; the Ministers never come to our villages. "You have one in this village just now", says the Chief Minister; and there is a general laugh. However, perhaps he is an exception. It is all too true that the Ministers, apart from the tireless Mr. Nehru and a few more, spend too much time in their offices and too little keeping effective contact with the villagers. Today, the Gandhi cap is worn by too many State Ministers and officials who deny the very things

that to Gandhi were most precious, above all this personal service of the needy.

I think of another village in that same area where one villager, as soon as he saw the white men approaching (my companion and guide that day was Philip Zealey), was eager to show us how good his new rice seed was, compared with the old seed. The rice was ripe, ready for harvest : “ Just look at that field — and then compare it with that other one, where I used the old seed. Why, I am getting twice the crop with your seed.” In other words, you and I together are doing something that I thought impossible. We pass to an area where, with much ceremony, a few months earlier, some new seedling trees were planted, to renew an old stretch of forest. But the drought since then has been bad, and we can find no sign of the seedlings. Not far off a boy is grazing some cattle. My heart sinks. No doubt the cattle have devoured all that there was of the little trees. But at least the boy may know if the trees are there. “ Yes, of course ”, he says, and soon leads us to the place. Some at least are surviving. And it is clear that he knows that he would get into trouble with his fellow-villagers if he allowed his half-starved cattle to eat the heads off the saplings.

Another village, in an adjacent state. It has been one of the most dirty, demoralised, backward villages of the whole district. But suddenly something has happened. My friend who lives near is not quite sure how it all happened ; but they had a bad cholera epidemic last summer, and now they have decided that that must not happen again. And is not this almost incredible ? For are not cholera epidemics a scourge of God, which will come when they will come ? This village has apparently decided otherwise. For the past few weeks they have

been working, all together, to improve the village roads, to get rid of jungly patches, where mosquitoes breed ; to dig new wells. We arrive unexpectedly in the late afternoon, when many men would have quit work for the day. But some are still at work and as we walk round the village, admiring the improvements, one of the leaders in this revival of the village for our guide, he gently mocks his neighbour who has finished work for the day, pointing out that his part of the road is getting behind schedule.

Again, I am in a village of refugees in Bengal, that is to say, of Hindus who have been obliged to leave their old homes in East Bengal, Pakistan. These people were offered a patch of country where the incidence of malaria was so high that the country-side had been deserted. There were men of determination among them, and they decided to get to work with the effective clearing of jungle, digging of ditches, and other essential preliminaries ; and in due course, huts were built and some hundreds of people moved in. When I was there they had been there barely a year. It was a thriving village ; the land was under cultivation ; the houses were surrounded with vegetables ; creepers were growing up the walls. They had built a school and a village hall. Nothing would satisfy them but that I should stay while some of the children performed a drama and danced in the hall.

On my arrival in the village, a poor woman, still suffering, as the older people too often do, from the pitiful delusion that a white man can solve their problems for them, came and threw herself at my feet, and poured out her tragic story of the death of her only son in Pakistan a year before. In both India and Pakistan, among the millions of refugees, one is suddenly reminded

CONSIDER INDIA

again and again of the hideous tragedies, so recent in their history, that accompanied that vast upheaval of 1947 and later. I have no idea how many of the other villagers in that new village could have told me similar tales. Perhaps even a majority. But instead of brooding over their sorrows or blaming the hard-pressed Bengal Government for not putting them onto a permanent dole, they had accepted this malaria-ridden patch of swamp, had built a flourishing new village, had banished the malaria and the doctor, and were eager to entertain the casual stranger with music and dancing. Does not such an experience go far to justify Gandhi's claim that life triumphs over death?

For some months, one of the enthusiasts of the Five-Year Plan in Uttar Pradesh (former United Provinces) sent me a weekly bulletin of development. One of the most impressive aspects of these reports was the record of voluntary communal labour. It would be decided that a certain district would have a community fortnight, during which the villages would vie with one another in a competition to see who could provide the largest number of man-hours in road-improvement, well-digging, or whatever other special piece of community work had been decided on. Although I have not seen one of these voluntary operations, an experienced Indian official told me that they were indeed a sight to see. He, at least, had seen nothing of the kind in his earlier official life before 1947.

Here, then, are a few experiences that happen to have come my way, in Orissa, in Madhya Pradesh, in Bengal, in Uttar Pradesh. There are plenty of stories going round India of similar new life bursting out in the Punjab, in Bihar, in Bombay, in Madras, in Kerala, indeed up and

down India. You can also still find many areas that seem to be quite untouched, where the poverty, the caste differences, the apathy, the fatalism of ages is still dominant, or seems so. But the dawn wind is blowing over India today. Two or three years after Gandhi's death, I said in a moment of gloom to an Indian friend : " Gandhi seems to be quite forgotten, or rather, worse than that, he has become a cult and is worshipped with the same hypocrisy that overtakes all great spiritual leaders." " Do not despair ", said my friend : " you live in the cities. Worst of all you live in Delhi. You must not expect to find those who really took to heart the teaching of Gandhi among the sophisticated townsmen, who are still mostly under the influence of western ideas and of materialism. But Gandhi is alive in the villages. Wait, and you will see." I have waited and I have seen.

Before we turn to political democracy in its narrower sense, something more needs to be said about Indian " socialism ", and perhaps the best man to say it is Mr. Jayprakash Narayan. Mr. Narayan, or, as he is usually called in India, Jayprakash, was at one time a student in America, where he earned his way through college. Whilst in America he became a socialist in the western sense ; and for some years he was leader of the Congress Socialist Party in India, that is to say the party that stood for achieving socialism by persuasion, not by force. Latterly he has come more and more under the influence of Gandhian thought, and today he is not even a member of the Praja Socialist Party ; his life is spent in assisting Vinoba Bhave, especially in the delicate and all important work of seeing that the land given to Vinoba is assigned to the most needy villagers.

In November 1956, he spoke at the Asian Socialist Congress. The main burden of his speech was to the effect that the noble dreams of equality, freedom and fellowship, peace and international brotherhood, which are the goals and the *raison d'être* of socialism, are being forgotten, and that most of the world's socialists are only thinking of the means to socialism, such as more public enterprise, more planning, more money spent on social services, in a word more state action in all spheres, whilst the goals remain as remote as ever. Further, "in Communist countries . . . dictatorship is being equated with democracy, state capitalism with socialism, colonialism and national expansionism with world revolution. After forty years of revolution and socialist reconstruction, equality and freedom, the most cherished values of socialism lie trampled underfoot." Moreover, he sees two special dangers for the socialist movement in Asia. First, the idea that the only task for socialists is to destroy feudalism and nascent capitalism; second, the idea that socialism might be equated with mere economic growth. The emphasis on economic development is natural in such poor countries, but dangerous.

What is his remedy? First he defines the goal, then the means to achieve it. "All of us agree that socialism is a way of life, an attitude of mind, a certain ethical behaviour. What is not so universally recognised is that such a way of life, attitude, behaviour, cannot be imposed from above by dictates of the State or by merely nationalising industry and abolishing capitalism. Construction of a socialist society is, fundamentally, construction of a new type of human being. The importance of such human reconstruction is admitted on all sides, but I am afraid no sooner is the admission made than it is forgotten and

every one joins in the race to get on the State wagon. Clearly, if human reconstruction is the key to socialist reconstruction, and if that is beyond the scope of the State, the emphasis in the socialist movement must change from political action to such work of reconstruction. . . .

“What will be the dynamics of such a movement? So far the dynamics of social change has been the conflict of self-interests. The self-interest of labour has been juxtaposed to the self-interest of capital, the intermediary interests choosing their sides according to their own view of the main conflict. Labour actuated by self-interest wishes to create a different social order in which it is assumed that selfishness will not rule the lives of men. Here you have a fundamental contradiction. As the Hindu proverb says you cannot plant a thorn-tree and expect it to bear mangoes.

“I think therefore that a new dynamics has to be found in consonance with the ultimate values of socialism. The reason the ideals of socialism are eluding the socialist movement is that the approach to them is faulty. Socialism has been defined in various ways. I would like to define a Socialist society as one in which the individual is prepared voluntarily to subordinate his own interest to the larger interest of society. The key word in this definition is *voluntary*. Men may be forced in various ways to subordinate their interest to the interest of others, but as long as force is needed to do so, socialism would be limited, even distorted; it may even be denied. Equality, freedom and fellowship can never become realities unless the moral evolution of the individual has been such that he voluntarily is prepared to limit his wants and his freedom in the interest of his

fellow human beings. . . . The world is plagued by wars — cold and shooting wars — and threatened with total destruction not because there is not enough for every one, but because every one wants the most for himself. I fear that, unless the moral development of Man catches up with his scientific and technical development, his fate is pretty tightly sealed.”

So, having formed these convictions, Jayprakash has thrown in his lot with Vinoba Bhave, the man who, when he set about studying economics, began by reducing his own living standard to two annas (two pence or ten cents) a day, so that he should understand not just what the books had to say about poverty, but rather what it felt like to be poor. And as he continues to live as a poor man, instead of joining in the scramble for comfort and wealth and political authority, the socialist in the Gandhian sense finds him the best leader.

“Wealth”, says Jayprakash, “can be distributed by law, but shared only voluntarily. Distribution of wealth may be an uncertain step towards socialism, but sharing of wealth is real and full socialism.” No doubt there are people who call themselves anti-socialist who might say, “If that is your socialism, we have no objection to it”. Indeed, it sounds not unlike what some people call “the kingdom of God”. Vinoba Bhave has in fact used this more “Christian” expression to explain his aim.

Men like Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash are critical of India’s Five-Year Plans, largely because they see them as too much directed from above. Nor are they happy about India’s new form of political democracy, which they find too western, too much inclined to accept majority rule as the best available form of democracy,

whereas the *Sarvodaya* ideal is the rule of all for the good of all.

By western standards, India has leapt straight into full representative democracy. Free India immediately advanced the franchise from the few million men and women who had property or education to every adult man and woman, making the humblest sweeper and simplest widow equal in political rights with the city magnate and the big landowner and the university professor. Much incredulity was expressed about the practicability of such a revolutionary step. The country was so vast, distances so great, transport in many areas so primitive, that it was deemed hardly possible to arrange for ballot-boxes and polling-stations on such a vast scale. Some mountain areas are only accessible from the plains during a few summer months when the snow has melted from the mountain passes. Some jungle tribes live in such remote tracts, and are more or less of nomadic habit, so that it would seem difficult to bring them onto an electoral register. In some parts of India, women are not traditionally free even to give their full names to anyone outside their own family. Would not their registration by government officials present insuperable difficulties? Above all, nearly 80 per cent of the men and a still larger percentage of women were still illiterate. Could they be expected to vote intelligently?

All of these and many other difficulties were in fact surmounted at the first elections in 1951. It is alleged that about a million women who might have registered did not do so. But that still leaves over eighty million who did. When it came to voting day, more women voted than men, and the poll was higher in rural districts than in the cities in spite of the many miles that had often to be

walked to the polling booth. The percentage of votes cast to total electorate was about 50 per cent, as high, indeed, as it sometimes is when a presidential election takes place in the United States. Very ingenious polling boxes were made. Almost no violence was reported, except for one Congress (government party) candidate who was injured by the agents of a former Rajah who had lost his position of authority. Nor was there any evidence of improper practices on the part of the very numerous election officers. The second general election was carried through with equal efficiency.

Did the illiterate electors know what they were voting for? It may not be possible to generalise. Certainly some voted for very odd reasons—almost as odd as some of the curious reasons that induce literate westerners to cast their votes. Probably a great many of the voters who supported the Congress candidates did so because on the whole they thought Mr. Nehru deserved a vote of confidence, rather than because they preferred his candidate in the locality to any other candidate. Clever electioneering played its part, of course. But it is quite wrong to suppose that illiteracy is identical with stupidity. When the men of an Indian village gather together under the shade of a great peepul tree, to discuss the affairs of the world, they can help one another to see where the true interest and welfare of their village lies at least as well as those who are the victims, the unwitting victims, of sensational press propaganda in the west. The women can also discuss public issues together with plenty of good sense. Illiteracy may well be a happier condition of mind, and a better foundation for citizenship, than half-literacy.

Indian democracy is based on the system by which the whole country is divided into single member constituencies ; every party can, and at the first general election, many parties did, contest these constituencies ; and the candidate receiving the largest number of votes is declared elected. There is no system of proportional representation, and no second ballot to ensure an absolute majority. Such a system obviously favours the well organised parties — or else some candidate with special local influence. This method of election has not gone unchallenged. Gandhi, for instance, always said that he would prefer to see each village treated as a unit, so that it would send its best citizen to a district conclave, the district choosing the man to go to the provincial legislature, and so on. Thus, he hoped to see general agreement rather than party conflict. At each level, the electors would learn who was in fact the most appropriate man to represent them. They would tend to judge by qualities that are really far more valuable for good government than the gift of the gab.

One of the best known leaders of the Indian National Congress told me that, when the Constitution of free India was under preparation, he suggested that it would be useful to provide some qualifications for prospective candidates, so that they would be obliged to show that they had already some public service to their name. But he was told by the constitutional pundits that such proposals were impracticable — which presumably simply means that no western democracy has attempted the task of defining such qualifications. It seems a pity that India did not place any indelibly Indian stamp on her new Constitution, but was content to copy what she found best in the political systems of the West. It was

perhaps thought that the Indian genius could take hold of any form that was reasonably utilitarian, and shape it according to Indian habits of mind.

Criticism, however, of the whole system, continues, as the following quotation from Vinoba Bhave will illustrate :

“ We must, I think, be clear about what we mean when we talk of . . . direct democracy. The more I think on this question the more I get convinced that a believer in direct democracy must remain aloof and outside and not get involved in the machinery. The idea of getting elected and accepting office in order to improve the working of democracy is a form of subtle self-delusion. Some one has said that government in India is becoming irresponsible because good men are not coming forward to form a strong party of opposition. I say it is just the opposite. That is, there is no effective criticism and curb on the Government because most politically minded people have got themselves attached to this or that party. Some keep mum because they belong to the ruling party and the criticism of the opposition parties does not become effective because people know that their main intention is to get into places of power. People therefore do not take them very seriously. Criticism can be effective only when it comes from disinterested quarters, that is, from people who are sincerely devoted to social service and do not belong to any political organisation. When I say effective I mean morally effective. It may not change the course of events immediately. But it will definitely create an effect on the minds of the people which will be lasting.” On the other hand, Vinoba went on to point out, in the *Bhoodan* movement, and at the annual *Bhoodan* conferences, “ Congressmen, P.S.P.

workers (Socialists), Communists, Janasangh (Hindu orthodox or Right-wing party) people all are equally welcome here ; and that is our real strength. A worker who devotes himself to the *Bhoodan* cause . . . should have the capacity to work with all." To the westerner, who has grown up in a world where the division between left and right, or between Socialist and anti-Socialist, is supposed to be so deep and rigid that the idea of fruitful co-operation between them would appear almost inconceivable, such talk may seem unrealistic. But perhaps the truth is that it is the western assumption that is unrealistic. In times of national emergency, there is found to be an adequate measure of common ground for co-operation between those who have been bitter political opponents only a few days before. What unites them is shown to be more important than the things that divide. India, perhaps, can help the world to discover that the real cleavage in politics is not the cleavage between left and right, but the division that separates the careerist, the man whose politics are in the main governed by personal considerations, and those whose real concern is for the well-being of the community as a whole.

Many years ago, when Gandhi, in London for the Round Table Conference, addressed a meeting of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, he was asked how he justified his claim that he represented the dumb, semi-starved millions of the Indian villages — 85 per cent of all India. The questioner was presumably expecting him to say : " Well, at the last general election, so many votes were cast for the Congress ". Gandhi said no such thing. His simple four-word reply was " By right of service ". What he would have said if some British official from the Indian Civil Service in the

audience had then intervened to say : “ But we also are trying to serve the dumb masses in the villages. Cannot we also claim to speak on their behalf ? ” I do not know. But at least the conception behind Gandhi’s reply shows a wholly different view of the right functioning of democracy from the tests normally applied in western minds. Vinoba, today, appears to be saying the same thing.

Why is it that millions of people go miles to hear Mr. Nehru make a public speech ? Those who explained the hold of Gandhi over the masses in India by saying that he was a Mahatma, a man of religious devotion, whose voluntary poverty and life of prayer appealed to the traditional sense of values in the Indian mind, cannot easily explain this new phenomenon. The crowds come to get *darshan*, we are told. But that explains nothing. Why do they trail for miles across the country roads to spend a couple of hours “ in the shadow ” of a man who, in the ordinary sense, is neither a man of prayer nor, certainly, a poor man ? The answer seems to be that he is known to be a man of one idea, and that idea is the service of the poor. Whether his policies are always the best possible policies for helping the poor is a matter open to question, as it is and must always be with every statesman. But the motive is not open to question. Here is a man whose life is directed to a single end, the welfare of the poverty-stricken masses of his country. To such a man, whether his name is Gandhi or Nehru or Vinoba or Jayprakash, the people of India will listen. Like other people, they may also be swayed from time to time by demagogues. But strangely enough, in a country where a great many men and women are superb speakers, who can pour out torrents of words for as long as they like,

these few who have captured the ear of the masses are none of them specially fluent speakers. It is their sincerity, not their fluency, that has put them in a class alone. Whether the great men of modern India would shine in the sharp thrust of debate in a western parliament, or whether they would make effective comments in the quick-witted brains-trusts of modern radio may be doubted. Possibly India will do something to rescue democracy from becoming the means of giving political power to men whose only claim to leadership is that they can think faster than others and produce a larger number of words out of their mouths. True Indian leaders must be able to interpret the minds of millions of peasants. Peasants are apt to be slow in speech and slow in thought. But at least they do think, and do not merely repeat parrot-wise what they have heard on the air or read in the press.

Vinoba, in the speech already quoted (in *Bhoodan*, December 5, 1956) had his own disinterested criticism to make of some actions of the Indian Government recently. During 1956, the state boundaries of India were re-drawn, following the report of a special commission. In most cases, an effort was made to draw the boundaries according to linguistic divisions. But this created great difficulties in some places, especially in Bombay, that great city of several million inhabitants which has grown up near the northern tip of the Mahratta country, and has drawn into its orbit large numbers of Gujarati-speaking people from further North. Today, therefore, the city contains both language groups. The Government proposed to keep the two areas in one state, with Bombay as the seat of the State Government. There were demonstrations, first from the Mahrashtrians, and later,

in the city of Ahmedabad to the North, from the Gujaratis. In both cases the demonstrators, who had resorted to violence, were fired on by the police and there were a number of casualties. Opposition groups demanded public enquiries into the firing; this demand was rejected.²

“Many Congressmen”, said Vinoba, “holding places of power and authority in the organisation have come and told me privately that they feel that a legal inquiry of the firings was necessary. But they have not the courage to say this publicly and this pains me much more because truth suffers. To me this is more serious than ordinary violence. But even here I do not want to judge those who are in authority. Fidelity to truth requires that we should be able to look at a thing as the other person looks at it. I feel that it was not truthful for those who believed in the need of instituting a legal inquiry to remain silent and meekly submit to the leaders in the government. But Congressmen would call this party loyalty. They think that party loyalty consists in supporting the decision of the party, right or wrong. They may criticise the action privately inside the party. But they must never say a word publicly against the majority decision of the party. I am opposed to this kind of party spirit. Loyalty to the party takes the place of loyalty to truth. That means in simple words one can never be loyal to truth if one is loyal to a party. Even good men without their knowing lose their sensitivity and respect for truth when they give themselves over to a party. This party loyalty is a delusion that we must avoid at all costs

² Linguistic and religious and other sectional struggles that flare up year by year in free India are not the main theme of this essay; but as reference has been made to the Bombay conflict, in order to quote Vinoba's comment, it should perhaps be noted that the old State of Bombay was divided in 1959, and the city is now in Maharashtra.

“ How can India’s voice have any effective influence in the world under these conditions ? All of us desire that India’s voice should be on the side of non-violence and peace in the world. But our internal policy must then be entirely peaceful and non-violent. Without this we can never be effective in the world. Non-violence can be effective when it is also truthful

“ Pyarélal (Gandhi’s former secretary) recently wrote to me and expressed the distress of his heart at seeing soldiers and generals going to Gandhiji’s *samadhi* at Rajghat in Delhi with their weapons. If one desires to pay homage to this image of peace must not one have the humility to keep away weapons of warfare? He said that this was symbolic of much that is happening in the country. He also informed me that the Government of Uttar Pradesh was thinking of introducing military training in schools I am mentioning this to draw your attention to the realities of the situation.

“ We cannot drift like this if we really believe in non-violence. We must think deeply and find out the way of *satyagraha* which is love and pure love and purer love. This is our true armour and effective weapon.”

A week later he returned to the same topics :

“ We are not denying the importance of politics, nor do we want to run away from it. This is not escapism. On the contrary our policy is based on stark realism. We want to change the spirit of politics. A government which is in power because it has succeeded in gaining 51 per cent votes against 49 per cent is not a representative government in the real sense of the word. Where are the people in whose name they govern? Where is the people’s voice? They do not represent the life of the

people. We want to end this system. The whole idea of ruling is wrong. We want to serve the people and there is no attempt to accumulate power. The current notion that one can serve through power is a delusion."

Here too the voice of Jayprakash Narayan demands attention. Several years ago he decided to abandon party politics, having become convinced that party politics inevitably leads to a struggle for political power. "I saw how parties backed by finance", he writes, "organisation and the means of propaganda could impose themselves on the people; how people's rule became in effect party rule; how party rule in turn became the rule of a caucus or coterie; how democracy was reduced to mere casting of votes; how even this right of vote was restricted severely by the system of powerful parties setting up their candidates from whom alone, for all practical purposes, the voters had to make their choice; how even this limited choice was made unreal by the fact that the issues posed before the electorate were by and large incomprehensible to it.

"The party system as I saw it was emasculating the people. It did not function so as to develop their strength and initiative, nor to help them establish their self-rule and to manage their affairs themselves."

Moreover, the socialist state as envisaged by many western socialists seemed likely to be an even worse tyrant than the normal nation state of the West. "The bourgeois state had monopoly of political power. The socialist state threatens to add to that the monopoly of economic power.... The economic and political bureaucracy would be so strong and in occupation of such vantage points that the liberties and rights of the people, as well as their bread, would be entirely at its mercy."

What remedy does he suggest? He recognises that in India today, as in other countries, the system of democracy through parties may be the best immediately available. He certainly does not want to discard it in favour of any kind of authoritarian rule. But he sees its inherent evils, and he therefore urges that true democrats, those who sincerely wish for "self-government, self-management, mutual co-operation and sharing equality, freedom and brotherhood", should begin exploring for a true remedy. He suggests that in India this must begin by working from the bottom, not from the top. First recognise that the village is the natural unit for political action. Indian villages are already too often split by factions; religious, caste and class divisions cut them apart. Add party factions, by introducing adherents of each political party into every village, and you simply add to friction and ill-will. All parties have united in support of Vinoba Bhave's work. Let them, says Jayprakash, unite for many other admittedly desirable purposes. The community projects, for instance, need the support of all sections of the village and the district. In the end, the village, instead of casting a number of individual votes for unknown men and women who will sit in parliamentary assemblies in Delhi or Bombay or wherever it may be, can agree to choose their best representative to serve on a local district council, dealing with the affairs of the district. Similarly the district council can choose its best members to serve in the provincial assemblies, and they in turn will send their best to the National Assembly.

It may be thought that such an emphasis on decentralisation will tend to discourage citizens from caring for anything but parish pump politics. Vinoba, at least, does

not think so. As he tramps from village to village across all India (I now quote Jayprakash again) “when Vinoba says, ‘This land does not belong to you alone, it belongs to the community’, he has in mind not only the village community but also the British community, and the Russian community, the Pakistan community and the American community. The idea is that whatever is on the earth belongs jointly to the human family. I have a share in what you have, and you have a share in what I have. It is this philosophy which Vinoba is preaching.”

Jayprakash continues : “Those of you who have been to India may know that we have various forms of greeting. Most of them have a religious origin although some are just mere social courtesy. During the freedom movement, a form of greeting arose which became very popular because Mr. Nehru and the political leaders of India popularised it, the two words ‘Jai Hind’ (Victory to India). Now during the past year, Vinoba has quietly introduced a new form of greeting which is very symbolic and significant. After he finishes his evening talk, he folds his hands and says, ‘Jai Jagat’. ‘Jai’ means victory and ‘Jagat’ means the world. He is no longer talking of victory to India, he is talking of victory to the world. And please imagine that he is probably talking to a group of villagers at a place that is perhaps thirty miles from the nearest railway station . . . where perhaps, the people do not know the names of all the Indian provinces. Vinoba is already trying to give them this idea of world citizenship. ‘We don’t belong to this little village, nor to this country of India, but to the whole world!’”³

³ From a speech made in Coleford, England, summer 1958, reported in *Bhoodan*, December 17 and 24, 1958.

CHAPTER VI

A NEW WORLD CULTURE?

SO FAR it has been Gandhi, Vinoba, Vinoba, Gandhi. Do these two men really fill the whole picture of the new India ? Of course not.

The blending of the dynamic Christian culture of the West with a re-discovery of the vital elements in India's own historic tradition can be traced back at least as far as the remarkable figure of Ram Mohan Roy, a great Bengali of the early nineteenth century, who is often spoken of as the father of the Indian Renaissance. This is not the place to attempt to review his life and work ; but it is at least worth recalling that Roy, himself a high caste Hindu, at the early age of sixteen, was so much under the influence of Islamic thought that he wrote a pamphlet against idolatry. Thirty years later, he wrote a book called *The Precepts of Jesus*, in which he rejected the divinity of Jesus, but accepted his ethical teaching. Roy was the founder of the well-known "Brahmo-Samaj", a religio-ethical society which had a powerful influence in Bengal especially during the middle of the nineteenth century, and still has a following among groups of intellectuals who reject Hindu orthodoxy. But its influence has perhaps never been very great outside Bengal.

Another remarkable figure in nineteenth century Bengal was the almost illiterate Ramakrishna, who was interpreted to the West by the orator Vivekananda. Ramakrishna was undoubtedly a man of religious genius, and he too broke free from Hindu orthodoxy and was influenced by what he knew of New Testament Christianity. In India today, there are many Ramakrishna centres whose members give themselves to the social needs of the poor and the outcaste. At this very time, 1958, a great new building is under construction in Calcutta which will house the educational work of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture. In the nineteenth century it is from Bengal that, again and again, new light came upon the Indian scene. It is surely of some significance that when Vinoba Bhave, himself a Maharashtrian, from the west of India, was a revolutionary youth, he undertook a special pilgrimage to Bengal, because "the five men for whom I had the highest respect and admiration were all Bengalis : Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore".

Although Vinoba Bhave, who is a Maharashtrian, admired most of all several great men of Bengal, it is worth noting here that Gandhi, himself a Gujarati, learnt most as a young man from a great man of Maharashtra, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Gokhale was a man with no inherited wealth and little social standing, a teacher at a college in Poona, whose abilities and integrity were such that he became the chief leader of Indian national opinion before he was forty years old; he was nominated to membership of the Viceroy's Executive Council, where he was the chief critic of British Government policy in the days of Lord Curzon, at the turn of the century.

He founded the Servants of India Society, a small body of selfless, dedicated men, who from that day to this have continued to serve India, and especially the disinherited sons and daughters of India, through developing social and educational agencies for the benefit of the Harijans (untouchables), the oft-neglected tribal people of remote hills and jungles and other needy classes. Gandhi himself once planned to join the Servants of India Society, but his *guru*, Gokhale, advised against it. Gokhale was not, in fact, many years older than Gandhi, but he became prominent when quite young and he died before he was fifty ; so that he seems in retrospect to have belonged to an earlier generation.

Gandhi first met Gokhale in 1896, when he had come from South Africa to India to plead the cause of the harassed Indian community in South Africa. A few years later Gokhale visited South Africa to see for himself what the Indian disabilities were ; and he made a great impression on the South African Government. After his death, Gandhi, looking back to these early days, wrote of his first meeting with Gokhale : “ It was like meeting an old friend or better still a mother after a long separation. His gentle face put me at ease at once. He was concerned about how I spoke, dressed, walked and ate. My mother was not more solicitous about me than Gokhale. There was, so far as I am aware, no reserve between us. It was a case of love at first sight and it stood the severest strain. He seemed to me all I wanted as a political worker—pure as crystal, gentle as a lamb, brave as a lion and chivalrous to a fault. It does not matter to me that he may not have been all these things. It was enough for me that I could discover no fault in him to cavil at. He was and remains

for me the most perfect man on the political field. Every word of Gokhale glowed with his tender feeling, truthfulness and patriotism. I believe he had the capacity cheerfully to mount the gallows for the country's sake if necessary."¹

One incident of Gokhale's life is worth recalling, for it is just the kind of thing that must have made a deep impression on Gandhi. In 1897, a year after the first meeting of Gokhale and Gandhi, Gokhale spent some months in London as a member of an Indian deputation. While he was in England, there was a severe outbreak of plague round his home town of Poona. The Bombay provincial government took stringent measures to suppress the plague. These measures were executed mainly by British troops. Gokhale, in London, received detailed reports from correspondents in Poona whom he deemed reliable to the effect that the troops were misbehaving themselves and that they had molested women. Finally, Gokhale wrote a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, revealing these things. Thereupon, the Bombay Government instituted urgent enquiries and sent categorical denials of the charges. Gokhale did not challenge the denials or suggest that a proper judicial enquiry be held. He wrote letters of complete withdrawal and apology; nor could anyone persuade him to reveal the names of the correspondents on whose good faith he had relied. Indeed, it was with some difficulty that his friends, British and Indian, dissuaded him from withdrawing from public life.

For Gandhi, who was for ever trying to apply the moral law with all stringency to political life, such a shining example from the man who had just

¹ *Young India*, July 13, 1921.

become his political *guru* must have been a great inspiration.

Because of his special position as political godfather of Gandhi, Gokhale has claimed special attention here ; but in any case it is important to recognise that the Indian Renaissance did not spring from Bengal alone. There were poets, artists, reformers, most of them quite unknown even today outside India or beyond the borders of their own province, who were preparing the day for the new India. Gokhale may stand for them all. But now we must return to Bengal, for it is in that part of India that the ferment was working most actively in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The great Bengali who belongs to this essay is the poet, Rabindranath Tagore. I call him "the poet", because he is best known to the world as a poet. In fact he was a man of many attainments, a typical Bengali of his time, whose artistic genius expressed itself not only in the arts proper but in such varied activities as the founding of a school which might be called the children's own school ; and of a University in which artistic expression is as central as it is in the educational conceptions of Plato, and in which all the living cultures of the world are interpreted by their own scholars ; also he founded a school of rural crafts, where young men from the villages of Bengal learn, not only how to make two blades of rice grow where one grew before, but also that the true prosperity of their villages depends on co-operation among the inhabitants.

C. F. Andrews, who was the intimate friend of both men, spoke of Tagore and Gandhi as the two eyes of India. Having given much space to the left eye, it seems

appropriate to spend a few pages looking through the right eye.

In 1901 Rabindranath Tagore, then a man of forty, with small children of his own, persuaded his father to let him start a school for small children among the trees at Santiniketan, on gently rolling country in West Bengal where his father had gone to live in peace and tranquillity some years before. Describing this later, Rabindranath himself wrote :

When I brought together a few boys, one sunny day in winter, among the warm shadows of the sal trees, strong and straight and tall, I started to write a poem . . . but not in words.

Marjorie Sykes writes :

The days in the school began and ended with music. Rabindranath taught the boys to sing his own beautiful hymns, and every morning before sunrise a group of singers would go round the ashrama and wake the boys by singing one of these songs. They were songs of joy and praise to God for morning and evening, for the flowers of spring and the harvest of autumn, for the heat and dew, for the days of storm and rain, and for the quiet moonlit nights.²

During the first year, Rabindranath had only five pupils, one of whom was his own son. But slowly the school grew. After a few years there were a hundred and fifty boys living there. Nowadays (1944), there are many girls also, who have their own hostel, but share all the classes and other activities with the boys.

When Rabindranath started the school, he had in his mind the *tapovana*, the forest dwellings of ancient India. The scholars and students who founded them were seekers of truth, and for the sake of truth they lived away from crowds, among the natural beauties of the forest. The boys lived with their teachers, in a very simple way. They learned to think truth more important

² *Rabindranath Tagore* by Marjorie Sykes (Longmans), p. 54.

than riches, to love Nature, and to respect all life. Rabindranath believed that India's work is to teach the world this love of outward simplicity and inward truth. But in the cities and towns of India Indians themselves are forgetting it.³

The school was to be a home and a temple in one. . . . The teachers and the boys lived together like elder and younger brothers, and Rabindranath played with them, and was often the liveliest of all. . . .

"I never said to them 'Don't do this'; 'Don't do that'. I never prevented them from climbing trees or going where they liked" But he knew that we do not get freedom by doing exactly as we like, without considering the needs and wishes of other people. . . . Rabindranath taught his boys to understand and enjoy this kind of freedom. They saw for themselves that some laws were necessary for their school society. They made their own rules and they elected their own leaders. . . . When a boy did not keep the rules which had been agreed on, the boys decided themselves whether he should be punished and how. In working out his plans for the school, Rabindranath deliberately used and adapted methods he had observed in Europe and America. Methods that had proved successful with difficult boys in the West worked with equal success when he was sent boys whose parents found them difficult at home or in ordinary city schools in India. In this way he built up a "forest school" which was really suited to the needs of modern India.⁴

Rabindranath did not believe in trying to teach religion to children by set lessons in school. True religion, he said, is not to know any set of historical facts, but to feel the reality of God. Children will learn of God naturally if they live with people who love and worship Him, and with the beautiful things which God, the "World Poet", pours into His world. Rabindranath taught the children to sit in silence for a quarter of an hour, at sunrise and sunset every day. He did not tell them what they should think about in the silence, or ask them how they had spent their time. He believed that the time of quiet was in itself good for body, mind and spirit, and that the beauty of their surroundings

³ op. cit., p. 53.

⁴ op. cit., pp. 57, 58.

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would of itself, and without any effort, help their minds to grow.

Over the gate at Santiniketan is the inscription :

Here in this ashrama the One Invisible God is to be worshipped.

Marjorie Sykes notes :

To preserve the peace of worship, three things are required from those who live here : to use no idol or image of God in their worship, to avoid speaking ill of others' religious beliefs, and to do no injury to bird or beast.⁵

Already when Rabindranath Tagore had developed his "forest school" only for Indian children, he had an English helper, W. W. Pearson. Throughout his life he recognised no human boundaries ; or, if he encountered them, he sought to surmount them. It was thus in keeping with his whole outlook that, after returning from a visit to post-war Europe in 1920, he resolved to do what he could to promote goodwill between the nations and races of mankind. With this end in view, he founded Visva-Bharati at Santiniketan — a name meaning a true "university", a centre for universal knowledge or world culture.

The work of Visva-Bharati can be thought of as growing up in three concentric circles. The innermost circle is the circle of India. Rabindranath, the patriot, wanted Indians to learn to understand and love all the treasures of their own country. The social traditions, literature, art and music of India contain rich treasures which vary from place to place. Rabindranath saw clearly that it was not

⁵ loc. cit., p. 51.

enough to know only one's own province, language or religion. He himself loved Bengal deeply, but he never forgot that Bengal is only part of India. It is good that love should be deep, but it must not be narrow. It is right that a Muslim should feel proud of the greatness of Islam, that a Bengali should be proud of his musical language, and that a Tamil should be proud of the saints and poets of Tamil Nad. But, said Rabindranath, this good and rightful pride will become a false and poisonous one if we do not also respect and honour different forms of greatness in other provinces, languages and creeds. Visva-Bharati, therefore, welcomes students from every part of India. They live together in the same hostels and eat in the same dining-room. . . . In the Music School, the Manipuri dance from Assam is taught side by side with the Kathakali from Travancore. Students learn to appreciate and understand Rabindranath's modern Bengali music and at the same time to take an interest in the traditional schools. The Art School has in its museum treasures from every part of India—paintings, carvings, pottery, embroideries—which are placed in turn, one by one, in a special case in the centre of the *ashram*, where everyone can see and enjoy them. . . .

The second circle is the circle of Asia. Persia and India, Ceylon, Burma and Malaya, Tibet, China and Japan, are all parts of one great continent. Travellers, traders and teachers have journeyed to and fro across this continent for thousands of years. China and India are the homes of civilizations which are thousands of years old. The teaching of Gautama Buddha was first given in India but it has spread through Asia, and millions of people in every corner of the continent are now called by his name. His ideas have spread more widely still.

A department for Chinese studies was developed in Santiniketan in the early nineteen-twenties. The study of Islamic culture followed later.

The beautiful handicrafts and arts of Japan and China, Malaya and Thailand, Java and Sumatra, and other Asiatic countries, can be seen in the Art School Museum. From time to time, students

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from all these lands have been enrolled in one or other department of Visva-Bharati. In this way the students are helped to realise that no country is ever completely independent of other countries in its thought or art or civilization. . . .

The third circle is the world circle, which includes along with Asia the civilizations of the West, of Europe and America. Every invader of Indian history, from the Aryans onwards, has contributed something of value to the rich civilization of the country. Rabindranath believed that the British also, the latest comers, have a valuable contribution to make. India must not turn her back on western culture, but study and understand it, and learn the lessons it can teach her. "I know Santiniketan will not bring forth its fulness of flowers and fruit if it does not send its roots into the western soil", wrote Rabindranath.⁶

Rabindranath himself wrote :

I have founded Visva-Bharati as a school in which men of different civilizations and traditions may learn to live together. You may think it is a very small place in which to begin such a huge task. The smallness of the beginning does not frighten me. All great ideas have to be born, like men, as very small babies. Visva-Bharati is a big idea. If it is alive, it will grow, as all living things grow.

There are, of course, many universities in the West where the cultures of the rest of the world may be studied. But in the main, western universities are centred in the idea of the supremacy of the western world. Greece and Rome are studied because they gave rise to the modern West. If Egypt or Babylon are studied, the interest is purely archaeological. If China and India come into the picture, they are quite outside the central curriculum. A western man of culture must know something of Homer and Plato, of Virgil and Horace and Julius Caesar. They are essential parts of his heritage.

⁶ op. cit., pp. 85-9.

But he need not know anything about the Buddha or Confucius. Such ignorance does not stamp him as an uneducated man. So that it can fairly be said that Rabindranath's creation is a new conception. His baby belongs to a new species in the world of education ; it is more than a mere variety.

He believed with his whole being that man must learn to be loyal to the whole human species if he is to survive. Loyalty to the nation is not enough ; indeed, it is becoming a menace to the race, to the earth and all its inhabitants.

During the evolution of the Nation the moral culture of brotherhood was limited by geographical boundaries, because at that time those boundaries were true. Now they have become imaginary lines of tradition divested of the qualities of real obstacles. So the time has come when man's moral nature must deal with this fact in all seriousness or perish. The first impulse of this change of circumstance has been the churning up of man's baser passions of greed and cruel hatred. If this persists indefinitely, and armaments go on exaggerating themselves to unimaginable absurdities, and machines and store-houses envelop this fair earth with their dirt and smoke and ugliness, then it will end in a conflict of suicide. Therefore man will have to exert all his power of love and charity of vision to make another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality. The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings.⁷

The doom of the world, if it comes, will come through political folly ; but the statesmen of the world are not its real leaders. Those who, in the long run, control the

⁷ *Nationalism* by Rabindranath Tagore.

destiny of man are the leaders of thought and of the arts, those who control the inner promptings of the mind and the emotions. Here, the India of Gandhi and Tagore, of Vinoba and other seers, most of them unknown to the West, are opening our eyes to the hidden tendencies by which we are driving ourselves to our doom.

Rabindranath Tagore was wise in his decision to seek for harmony between the cultures of the world. He saw the way to human unity through art ; for art achieves unity, not through an enforced uniformity, but through the harmonising of things that at first sight seem incompatible. The West tends to divide life into opposite compartments. India prefers to break down these divisions. " The art of India ", writes Dr. Stella Kramrisch, " is neither religious nor secular, for the consistent fabric of Indian life was never rent by the western dichotomy of religious belief and worldly practice."⁸

We are concerned here with what is sometimes termed " the pairs of opposites " or perhaps it would be better to say, the illusion that the world consists of pairs of opposites. There is a right hand and a left hand ; there is light and darkness ; there is waking and sleeping ; there is black and white ; there is up and down ; there is truth and falsehood ; there is beauty and ugliness ; there is right and wrong. But is this the ultimate truth ? We meet ambidextrous people ; there is twilight ; there is a world of dreams ; there is grey ; and so on. India distrusts the pairs of opposites. Once more, let us hear the voice of Vinoba Bhave :

Sociologists have mistakenly presumed a conflict between the interests of the individual and society. Men on the Left put the

⁸ *The Art of India* by Stella Kramrisch, p. 10.

interests of society first and make the individual subserve to society. Those on the Right make the individual too important and deny any social obligation. There is a distortion of reality. The individual and society are not two separate entities ; they are but two sides of the same coin. . . . I am deeply aware of the importance of the individual. The individual mind is the birthplace of all that is new, all that is good. Through him alone it spreads in society ; he is its vehicle. *Sarvodaya* gives the greatest importance to the full development and well-being of the individual. . . . *Sarvodaya* does not believe in the doctrine of achieving the greatest good of the greatest number. . . . *Sarvodaya* is the well-being of every one. It believes that there can be no conflict between the real good of one person and that of another.

Two quotations from recent western writers, both of them perhaps influenced by eastern thought, are apposite here. The first is from a recent address by Dr. Henry A. Murray, quoted in *Manas*—the Los Angeles philosophical weekly—of March 2, 1960 from the *Saturday Review* of January 23, 1960.

“In a sense”, writes Dr. Murray, “the world testament would be a parable, a parable of parables, expressive of the universal need for peace, for interdependence, for fruitful reciprocations among those manifold units of mankind which are still proud and quarrelsome, still locked in clenched antagonisms. Its symbolisms would commemorate on all levels the settlement of hostilities between opposites, their synthesis or creative union : man and nature, male and female, reason and passion, understanding and imagination, enjoyable means and enjoyable ends, science and art, management and labor, West and East.”

The second quotation is from a pamphlet called “The Rainmaker Ideal”, published by the Guild of Pastoral

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Psychology in London, February, 1960, being a lecture delivered in November 1959 by Irene Claremont de Castillejo. She says :

“ In those rare moments when all the opposites meet within a man, good and also evil, light and also darkness, spirit and also body, brain and also heart, masculine focussed consciousness and at the same time feminine diffuse awareness, wisdom of maturity and childlike wonder ; when all are allowed and none displaces any other in the mind of a man, then that man, though he may utter no word, is in an attitude of prayer.”

Do not deny the opposites, but find the principle of unity between them. See what metal is the common coin, whose two sides they are. Is it called life, or truth, or harmony ? Is it even sometimes called *Sarvodaya* ?

When the West penetrated into India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian culture was in a state of decay, and Indian monism had undermined morality, as monism may well do. If you insist that fighting is right for one man but wrong for another ; that meat-eating is right for one, but wrong for another ; so too with polygamy, with murder, with robbery, there may come a time when good and evil are no longer distinguishable. The imagination that sees behind the deed and estimates the motive and the context, which may extenuate or even justify an apparently immoral act, is so dazzled that all deeds appear equally moral or amoral. From this disease of the imagination India has been saved by the new forces that have come to her out of the West ; and above all by Gandhi, whose emphasis on right and wrong was as strict as that of any Puritan. But with this profound difference. Gandhi did not say : “ I have seen that the world is in danger of

destruction through violence ; therefore every man who commits violence is a sinner ”. On the contrary, though he proclaimed and lived by the way of non-violent heroism, he insisted that each man must be true to his own light and must follow his own path. Better to be a soldier and fight than to follow the way of non-violence merely because Gandhi followed it. Do not renounce violence, said Gandhi, until you yourself have discovered that you can live without resort to it, until your own mind is purged of violent thoughts. Follow your own moral law, not mine. But that does not mean that one way is as good as another. That, he never believed.

But India, now that her ancient wisdom is revitalised to fit the modern age, has something more to say than Gandhi’s teaching of political pacifism and non-violent means of struggling against cruelty and injustice and oppression. Nor is dynamic neutralism in politics the main lesson to be learnt from India. Those things are no more than the applications to politics of a spirit that has risen above the conception of the world as primarily the scene of a perpetual conflict of truth against falsehood. In the West, nation fights against nation, religion against religion, ideology against ideology. Both sides convince themselves that their side represents truth and right, whilst the other stands for falsehood, or for injustice, which is falsehood in political and social life. But these battles are often false battles, due to ignorance and lack of imagination ; above all, due to arrogance.

Only the rare artistic minds of the West have yet perceived that

All things by immortal power,
Near or far,
Hiddenly

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To each other linkéd are,
That thou canst not stir a flower
Without troubling of a star.⁹

India, like one of her ancient dancing deities, stretches out many limbs towards all the world, saying to each : “Thou too art I, for all are one”. India looks toward China and Japan to the North-east ; to the North-west towards the Islamic and Arab worlds ; to the North towards the Soviet Union ; to the South-west towards Africa ; to the South-east to Indonesia and Australasia. Western Europe and the Americas are beyond her horizon ; but a strange destiny sent to her land the traders of an Atlantic island, agents of a people whose history has linked them, on the one hand with Europe, and on the other with the American shore of the Atlantic and with many distant lands. These Atlantic islanders, having been in some degree agents for revitalising the spirit of India, may now share in the process of interpreting the Indian way of life to the western world. Whether that happens or not, the time has come for all the world to study the new harmonies which free India is trying to create in her land today.

We may learn from her a sense of compassion for the whole creation—compassion that stems from the perception that we are bound together with all that lives and has being.

In the West, ever since Darwin, men have tended to fix their gaze on “some far-off . . . event to which the whole creation moves” : “divine event”, said nineteenth century Tennyson ; “human event”, says the mid-twentieth century, full of assurance in what man can do to his environment and to the forms of human

⁹ *The Mistress of Vision* by Francis Thompson.

society in which he finds himself. And this is the prevalent mentality on both sides of the iron curtain. In either case it is a noble dream world for which today's joys must be sacrificed. Let us submit to a strait jacket now in order that our grandchildren may be assured of perfect liberty. If we will let some of the ageless wisdom of India, re-interpreted by Gandhi, mingle with our western ideals, we may perceive that the divine events of today, the poems we write with our neighbours here and now, will not delay the fulfilment of our dreams, but may even hasten them.

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INDIAN THOUGHT THROUGH THE AGES

A STUDY OF SOME DOMINANT CONCEPTS

B. G. Gokhale

Nine basic concepts have been chosen for discussion by the author. The first chapter is a survey of Indian ideas on the concept and interpretation of history. The next three chapters deal with three of the four ideals of life—*Purusbarthas*—which are rightly regarded as the bases of the Indian Philosophy of life. A chapter each has been devoted to the discussion of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* in order to examine their changing contents and to establish the possible correlation of events and ideas as revealed by the history of these concepts. The next two chapters deal with *Karma*, *Punarjanma* and *Samsara* which together constitute the Indian World View. The following two chapters deal with ideas on political organization, authority, freedom, war and non-violence. The last chapter briefly examines the idea of a Man Perfected as it appears in ancient Indian Literature and modern Indian thought.

The author has discussed these concepts not as metaphysical abstractions but as living and changing ideas which have influenced the lives of millions of people through the ages.

The author has asked a few legitimate questions regarding the assumptions made whenever there is any discussion on aspects of Indian culture: What is the nature and extent of Indian "spirituality" which is generally taken as an explanation of poverty and backwardness afflicting the lives of millions of people? What are the economic and political implications of the caste system enshrined in the concept of *Dharma*? Why do ideas of renunciation and other-worldliness appear from time to time in the history of ideas in India? Do they stem from certain political and economic causes? To achieve his purpose, the author has drawn on a wide variety of sources on Indian thought and history. — 22 × 13.5 cm., xii + 236 pp.

THE WAY OF GANDHI AND NEHRU

S. ABID HUSAIN

The writings of Gandhi and Nehru are significant even to people beyond the borders of India, and for an important reason. Both have summed up in their writings the response of the Orient to the West—western values, western science, western technology and western ways of living. They indicate both admiration and suspicion of Western culture. It is not an exaggeration to say that every man in Asia responds to the West either as Gandhi or as Nehru.

This book seeks to analyze the thoughts and ideas of Gandhi and Nehru in all their various aspects, their range of thought, their profound moral bases, their fundamental differences and their no less fundamental agreements.

Dr. Abid Husain has brought to this study not only profound scholarship—which is apparent in the wealth of the sources he quotes—but also a sympathetic understanding, which he could have got, and did get, only by close contact with these great men. It is for these reasons that this work, which is unique in its summing up of the thoughts of Gandhi and Nehru, is important to anyone (European or Asian) who has an interest in Asian affairs and who tries to understand them. — 22 × 13.5 cm., xx + 179 pp.

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THE NATIONAL CULTURE OF INDIA

S. ABID HUSAIN

“India’s cultural history of several thousand years shows that the subtle but strong thread of unity which runs through the infinite multiplicity of her life, was not woven by stress or pressure of power groups but the vision of seers, the vigil of saints, the speculation of philosophers, and the imagination of poets and artists and that these are the only means which can be used to make this national unity wider, stronger and more lasting.”

This is the underlying thesis of this celebrated work by Dr. Abid Husain, the first edition of which won the Sahitya Academy award in 1956. In this thoroughly revised and enlarged edition, the author traces the development of the national culture, from the coming of Aryans to the end of the Mughal period and proceeds to discuss how, with the advent of the British, the dominant position of the Western culture resulted in the temporary relegation of the national culture to the background and why the contact of the Indian culture with that of the West failed to produce any new fusion which could provide the basis for a new national culture. He then follows the trends of the present cultural movements in India and discusses in what direction they should be orientated in order to help the evolution of a rich and harmonious national culture. — 22 × 13.5 cm., xiv + 237 pp.

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